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CORRIGENDA TO PART II.

- Page 151, line 3 from bottom, for "a Syrian Prince" read "King of Zobah."
- 156, line 10 from bottom, for "towards the Jordan" read "beyond the Jordan."
- 159, line 5, for "Gibeon of Saul" read "Gibeah of Saul."
- 162, last line, for "which ministered" read "who ministered."
- 164, line 3 from bottom, for "Moab" read "Edom."
- 164, bottom line, and page 165, two first lines, for "Eliadah, the successor of Hadadezer, prince or king of Zobah, a district of Syria" read "Rezon of Damascus, the son of Eliadah, who had made himself king of Syria."
- 172, line 15, for "nor was" read "not now."
- 174, line 9 from bottom, for "their" read "this."
- 177, line 2, for "ten years" read "twelve years," and for "B. C. 910," read "B. C. 918."
- 178, last line, dele "three."
- 184, line 12, for "Edomites" read "Ammonites."
- 185, line 11, for "Beelzebub" read "Baalzebub."
- 185, line 4 from bottom, for "the tributories" read "these tributaries."
- 188, line 21, for "obelsance" read "case known."
- 189, line 6 from bottom, dele "e" in "wonderous."
- 191, line 6 from bottom, for "eight years" read "five years."
- 199, line 2, for "Jehohaz" read "J-hoash."
- 199, line 19, for "twenty years" read "eleven years."
- 199, line 24, for "thirtieth" read "thirty-eight."
- 203, line 2, for "Resem" read "Rezin."
- 208, line 12 from bottom, for "two" read "three."
- 208, last line, for "fort" read "bank."
- 213, line 8 from bottom, for "Nidus" read "Ninus."
- 213, line 18 from bottom, for "of the causes which led to which" read "and of the causes which led to it."
- 217, line 12 from bottom, for "Palestine" read "Philistia."
- 218, for "Jehoaikim" read "Jehoiakim."

SACRED HISTORY.

PART II.

CHAP. XXV.

SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL.

CIVIL WAR. DAVID KING OF JUDAH. KING OF ALL
ISRAEL. MURDER OF AMNON. EXILE AND RE-
TURN OF ABSALOM.

WHEN this great reverse befell the armies of Israel, David with his men was in Ziklag, whither he had retired after the defeat of the Amalekites. He had rested there two days, when one who described himself as a fugitive from the lost battle, appeared before him. The man was an Amalekite, and hoping to win David's favour, stated, that he had himself slain Saul in order to hinder him from falling alive into the hands of the Philistines; and he laid at the same time a crown and bracelet, taken, as he added, from Saul, at David's feet. But David experienced no joy at the tidings. On the contrary, after upbraiding the messenger for the evil deed that he had done, he caused him to be slain on the

spot, and spent the rest of the day in mourning with his people the heavy blow which their nation had sustained.

B. C. 1156. — The blow, though severely felt on public grounds, operated to the private advantage of David and his friends. He was immediately proclaimed king by the tribe of Judah, and kept his court at Hebron. But the rest of the Israelites did not at once give in their adhesion. Saul had left yet one son, by name Ish-bosheth, whom Abner, the general-in-chief of the late monarch, set up in his father's room, and eleven out of the twelve tribes accepted him as their sovereign. The Hebrews continued about seven years in a state of alienation among themselves. During the first two of these there was no civil war. David seems to have been unwilling to shed the blood of his own people, and Ish-bosheth and Abner respected him too much, rashly to provoke a contest. But in 1154 hostilities began by a sort of combat of champions near the pool or fountain of Gibeon, out of which not one of all who took part in it on either side, came forth alive. This was followed by a general action, which ended in the defeat of Ish-bosheth's troops, though it cost the life of a fine youth called Asahel, the brother of Joab, David's commander-in-chief, and a nephew of the king. The young man, it is true, fairly courted his own destruction. Being fleet of foot, he pursued Abner, and though repeatedly cautioned to seek some humbler enemy, he refused to turn aside from his purpose. In self-defence Abner slew him, and provoked thereby the implacable hatred of Joab.

B. C. 1148. — The war thus begun extended over six years. It brought constant accessions of strength to David's party ; and at last Abner himself, because

of a private quarrel with Ish-bosheth, proposed to transfer his allegiance, and bring the body of the people with him. But before this treason could be consummated, two acts of violence, both of them morally inexcusable, laid Israel at David's feet. The first was the murder of Abner, which Joab, in revenge for his brother's death, effected. The second was the assassination of Ish-bosheth himself, whom two of his inferior chiefs attacked in his bed, and put to death. Both deeds were, however, disavowed by David. For the first he caused a general mourning and lamentation to be kept — the second he avenged by cutting the murderers to pieces. And all Israel, as if satisfied that one who could so act ought no longer to be opposed, accepted him as king.

B. C. 1147. — David was thirty years of age when the crown of Judah devolved upon him. He wore it forty years: his reign over the twelve tribes extended to thirty-three years; and he raised the kingdom in that interval to the highest pitch of prosperity. His first exploit was the reduction of Mount Zion, which up to his day the Jebusites had retained, and the removal immediately afterwards to Jerusalem of the chief seat of government. He proceeded next to meet and repel a renewed invasion of the Philistines, whom he overthrew in two great battles. Then turning upon the Amorites on one side, and the Idumeans or people of Edom on the other, he defeated and reduced them to a state of vassalage. Nor was Moab more fortunate. Against that nation he waged a war of exceeding fury, destroying not less than two thirds of its population; and when the armies of Hadadezer, a Syrian prince, came out to succour them, he defeated him also, and overran his country. In a word, David waged for

well nigh twenty years, wars, in which he uniformly prevailed, against all his neighbours. He filled Jerusalem with the spoils of conquered cities; he took chariots and horses without number, — he entirely purged the home districts from heathen occupiers and from heathen practices, and extended the limits of the kingdom as far as the bounds which God had set to them. Nor was he forgetful of other matters. He erected in Jerusalem a tabernacle, after the pattern of that which Joshua had set up at Shiloh; and removing thither the ark, with great rejoicing and pomp, caused God's worship, which had been too long interrupted, to be renewed with exceeding splendour. It is recorded of him that he incurred, by so doing, the contempt of his wife Michal, the daughter of Saul. But her reproaches did him no harm, and she reaped her reward by his total severance from her society.

B. C. 1035. — It was in the midst of this career of glory and success, that David suffered himself to be drawn into the commission of certain crimes, which leave a deep stain upon his otherwise noble memory. — He became acquainted, during the absence of her husband in the field, with the wife of one Uriah, a Hittite, and prevailed upon her, too readily, to sacrifice to him her own and her husband's honour. The consequences were not slow in showing themselves, and David, in the hope of hiding the sin and the scandal, caused Uriah to be exposed at the siege of an Ammonite city, and slain. But David did not hide his sin from God, nor was punishment withheld from him. He entertained in his household a seer or prophet, called Nathan, of whom, and of Gad, it is recorded, that by them the book which we are now analysing, as well as a considerable portion of that which precedes it, was compiled. Through Nathan,

the king was accustomed to receive messages, so to speak, from Jehovah; one of which delivered not long before, while it restrained him from building a temple to the Lord, had assured him of a long career of honour and of royal rank to his posterity. But now the seer came on a different errand. By a very beautiful allegory, wherein a rich man is described as taking the solitary ewe lamb of his poor neighbour, and dressing it for a guest that had come to him, Nathan set forth the enormity of the king's offence; and David having declared that such cruelty deserved, and ought to be visited with the penalty of death, could not, when the whole truth was made manifest to him, draw back from his own judgment. "Now, therefore," said the prophet, "the sword shall never depart from thy house;" and "because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." David, who had married the partner of his guilt as soon as decency would permit, had flattered himself that there was an end to his difficulties. But he continued under the delusion only till the voice of inspiration dispelled it; for the child which was born to him by Bathsheba sickened and died, in spite of his bitter and earnest entreaties that God would show mercy and annul his own decree.

With all his generosity, his faith, his love of truth, and rooted piety, David seems to have been sadly the slave of the body and of its passions. He multiplied to himself wives and concubines, to such a degree, that though the father of many sons and daughters, only two of these, Absalom the eldest and Tamar his sister, were born of the same mother. Moreover, David was weakly attached to all his

children, and Absalom in particular seems to have gained a complete mastery over him. As usually happens in lands where polygamy is allowed, these young people do not seem to have borne much good will one towards another. Hence the sins of the father were not only visited on the children, but the children became God's instruments for punishing the errors of the parent. And the punishment proved to be terrible.

B. C. 1032.—Tamar, David's daughter, was a fair and very amiable young person. She inspired her kinsman Amnon with a wicked passion; and, finding no other means of gratifying his desires, he did her cruel violence. She fled to her own brother Absalom, and told her griefs; and he plotted a deep revenge. Having persuaded her to keep silence, he went and came among his kindred, for two years, as if no special scheme engrossed him; and succeeded, as indeed he desired to do, in creating a general persuasion that the outrage was forgiven. This end gained, he invited Amnon to a feast at his country house, and there slew him. As usually happens in similar cases, an exaggerated report of the catastrophe reached David. He was told that Absalom had put the whole of his brothers to death; and, like one who is overwhelmed with grief and horror, the king refused to be comforted. Nor when the truth came to be known was his mind more at ease. David doated on Absalom; and hence, while he wept the dead Amnon, he wept even hotter tears over the fate of his favourite, who, to escape the vengeance of the law, fled out of Israel, and took shelter at Geshur, the capital of his mother's father, under whom, in the day of his exile, David had served.

B. C. 1027.—Nature had been generous in her

gifts of personal beauty to Absalom. His manners, also, were winning, and he knew how to conciliate the multitude. His absence, therefore, from his father's court was much and generally deplored. It was clear, likewise, that other society did not compensate David for the loss of that of his son; and hence Joab very soon contrived an artful scheme to enlist the king's consistency on the side of his prejudices. All the obstacles presented by law to the return of the exile were removed. Absalom was recalled, and, after a brief sojourn in disgrace at his own house, he returned to the favour of his father.

CHAP. XXVI.

SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL—*continued*.

ABSALOM'S REBELLION. HIS DEATH. NUMBERING OF THE PEOPLE. DAVID'S DEATH.

B.C. 1025. — Two years had not elapsed after the restoration of Absalom to favour, ere the people began to exhibit signs of impatience under the government of the king. David's wars, however successful, seem to have wearied them; and his unrelenting severity towards idolatry, and opposition to the impure habits arising out of it, disgusted a race still as prone as their fathers had been to seek the indulgence of the hour at all hazards.

It would appear, too, that from some cause or another, the course of justice did not run so smooth as of old; and that persons who came from afar to

plead one against another, were not always sure of getting a hearing. Now Absalom was full of ambition. He listened, likewise, to evil counsellors; and soon began to turn his popularity to a bad account. He affected great zeal in the people's cause. He spoke slightly respecting the royal care of their interests, and so won upon the giddy multitude that a vast majority of them began to look to him as their best friend. He did not discourage the feeling. Bathsheba had borne another son, of whom he pretended that he had good reason to be jealous; and at last, after his emissaries had well done their part, he raised the standard of rebellion. The act seems to have taken David quite by surprise. Either because he had not force enough to maintain the place, or that he distrusted the loyalty of the capital, he hastily retreated from Jerusalem, and Absalom, coming in soon afterwards, was, amid the acclamations of the mob, hailed as king.

B. C. 1021. — The rebellion thus excited was a very formidable one, and had Absalom followed up his first success with vigour, the consequences might have been serious. But he lingered in the capital amid scenes of debauchery and vice, to the disgust of some of the ablest as well as the most rancorous of his counsellors. Meanwhile David retreating towards the Jordan, had time to collect a considerable force at a place called Mahanaim; and there, when Absalom did take the field, he prepared to give battle. But the feelings of the father were still a great deal more powerful than those of the king. Being constrained by his subjects not to expose himself, he abode within the city walls, but gave, as his last orders to Joab, that not, on any account whatever, should Absalom be injured, far less slain. Joab, however, thought

rather of his duty as a good subject, than of humouring the caprices of the king. And therefore, finding Absalom caught by his hair in a thicket, he slew him, with wanton cruelty, perhaps, but not without a righteous purpose.

David never forgave the deed. The defeat of the rebels, and the re-establishment of the throne were alike forgotten in his grief over the slaughter of his favourite; and he began almost immediately to meditate the overthrow of a servant, whose influence and hardihood of character cast all his other good qualities into the shade. But Joab proved too strong for his master. A fresh rebellion broke out. The officer whom David employed to suppress it, exhibited a lamentable deficiency in the courage and decision which carried Joab triumphantly through every enterprise; and Joab having slain his rival, assumed once more, without a remonstrance from Jerusalem, the command of the troops. He put down the second rebellion as effectively as he had suppressed the first, and by the stern force of his character, kept the place, from which his master did not dare to remove him.

B. C. 1020.—The reign of David continued for about seven years after the suppression of this last rebellion. It was marked by a course of great prosperity, interrupted by two signal calamities, and no more; and though it came to an end amid circumstances which seemed, at one moment to threaten confusion, the good conduct of the king, and the wise counsels of his advisers, averted the evil. David himself, as old age advanced upon him, went out no more to battle. But his army, well disciplined and ably commanded, sustained no reverse abroad, and his guards, as well as the fidelity and diligence of his civil magistrates,

preserved order at home. His foreign alliances also, were both numerous and important. Over the heathen nations immediately adjacent to his own border he exercised a sort of feudal superiority; the more distant were glad to purchase his forbearance, by sending him gifts and assurances of their good will. Yet, the nation did not escape visitations altogether, nor was the king without his troubles.

The first of these came in the year B. C. 1020. A famine then devastated the land, and David, on inquiring into the cause of the judgment, was told that a bitter wrong done to the Gibeonites by his predecessor called for vengeance. Let it not be forgotten that the Israelites were pledged, so early as the days of Joshua, to respect the lives and possessions of that tribe, which alone, among the Canaanites, had offered no resistance to the conquest of their country, when first attempted. Now Saul, on ascending his throne, at once assumed that being a monarch he had a right to abrogate this engagement; and many of the Gibeonites, without any just cause assigned, were put to death. It was necessary that the Israelites should be taught that with Jehovah alone rested the power of annulling engagements entered into under the sanction of his name. Wherefore, when the people of Gibeon required that some of Saul's descendants should die for the sin of their father, the king felt himself constrained to yield to their wishes. One member of the obnoxious family he took, however, under his own special protection. Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, had been treated by him, ever since his accession, as a member of his own household. And he did not now withdraw from him or from his sons the favour which they had so long

enjoyed. But seven of their kinsmen, namely, two of Saul's sons by a concubine, and five of his grandsons by his daughter Michal, were given over to the vengeance of the wronged tribe. The Gibeonites hanged them in Gibeon of Saul, and the famine ceased.

B. C. 1017.—The second visitation occurred three years later, and was occasioned entirely by the misconduct of the king. A false pride grew upon him. He had achieved so much, through God's favour, that in the end, he began to attribute the result to his own wisdom and strength; and in an evil hour he sent forth his officers to take the number of fighting men whom, in any case of emergency, he might call into the field. They obeyed him with reluctance, and returned with such a report as tended to confirm the mistaken principle on which the order had been given. But in the midst of his false joy, Gad the seer stood before him, and, reproving him for what he had done, desired him to choose between seven years of famine, three months of defeat, or three days' pestilence. "I am in a great strait," was the king's answer; "but let us fall into the hand of the Lord;" and the pestilence came. It ran its course from Dan to Beersheba, cutting off not fewer than seventy thousand men.

B. C. 1014.—If David's sin was great, his penitence proved, on all occasions, to be deep and lasting. It was accepted, and the pestilence ceased. But the end of his days drew near; and clouds arising from the ill-regulated state of his family, threatened to obscure its approach. He had chosen, long before this, to be heir of the throne, Solomon, the second son whom Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah the Hittite, bore to him; and both in the

palace and throughout the land the personal qualities of the young prince, whose wisdom has passed into a proverb, were accepted as the best evidence that the selection was judicious. But the eldest of David's sons next after Absalom, whose name was Adonijah, felt aggrieved at the arrangement. He imagined that the throne ought, by right of seniority, to come to him; and he found more than one among the great men of the land to favour his views. Joab, the commander-in-chief, was of this number, so was Abiathar the priest, and they encouraged Adonijah to make friends with the people. But Nathan, David's faithful seer, and Zadok the priest, took part with Solomon; and they managed matters so well, that their point was carried without so much as a tumult. While Adonijah withdrew into the provinces, there to collect partizans, they prevailed on David to accept Solomon as his coadjutor; and the young prince was solemnly crowned amid the shouts of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Joab and Adonijah felt, at once, that they had failed. The latter hastened to make his submission, and was pardoned; the former fled for sanctuary into the tabernacle, and "laid hold of the horns of the altar." They were alike doomed men, as was Abiathar the priest, though they knew it not; for David himself settled their destiny with his last breath.

David felt his end approaching. He sent for Solomon, and gave him various instructions respecting his future conduct as king, advising him especially not to spare the heads of Adonijah's party. Joab in particular, he commended to his wrath, as well as a man of the house of Saul, named Shimei, whose life he himself had spared, but whom he always knew to be dangerous. Solomon did

not forget either injunction. He would listen to no entreaties from Joab, but slew him before the altar. Shimei he confined within the city walls, and hearing that he had broken his parol, immediately put him to death. And Adonijah, his brother, he cut off in like manner, because the young man presumed to ask one of his father's handmaids to wife. But before either of these events befell, David had breathed his last, in the seventy-first year of his age, and after a long and prosperous reign of forty years.

It is to David that we must look as the true founder of the Hebrew monarchy. When he received the kingdom from Saul it was torn with democratic factions, and bled at every pore from the repeated and disastrous inroads of the neighbouring nations. David put an end to the former evil, by uniting all parties under himself; and not only averted the latter, but gave to the realm its just extent. But David was more than either a warrior or a king. As a poet, we find few to rival him, either among the ancient or modern weavers of song; and in many of his productions a spirit of the loftiest inspiration is shown. The Psalms, of which by far the larger portion are the outpourings of his genius, testify to the truth of these remarks. They are not only beautiful, considered as the composition of a man of genius, but they abound in prophecies, of which we find a ready accomplishment in the fate of Christ and of the Christian church. David was a great and on the whole a good man; his vices were those of the age in which he lived; his faith, piety, and unwavering sense of the majesty and protecting care of God, stand, as well in modern times as in ancient, well nigh unrivalled.

CHAP. XXVII.

FIRST BOOK OF KINGS AND FIRST BOOK
OF CHRONICLES.SOLOMON. THE TEMPLE BUILT. SOLOMON'S
IDOLATRY. HIS DEATH.

B. C. 1014. — THE reign of Solomon, who succeeded David, extended, like that of his father, over forty years. It was a season to Israel of almost uninterrupted peace; for David's fame in war kept the neighbouring nations quiet, and Solomon's skill and vigour in the affairs of state put down all seditious movements. The great work of his life was the building of the Temple, and of a palace, in which for many centuries his successors on the throne resided. The foundations of the former edifice were laid in the year B. C. 1012; and in B. C. 1005 it was roofed in and completed. The latter was begun at a later period, and there was less urgency in pushing it forward; but both, and indeed all, the edifices which this great king undertook, were of the most gorgeous character. I have not space to describe in detail the arrangements and distribution of either. Enough is done, when I state that in the construction of the temple, the pattern of the tabernacle was carefully followed; and that though gold, and brass, and costly stone, and timber were abundant, they all took their places, so as to embellish, without disguising, the court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. To be sure there arose about the temple, as there have arisen about Christian cathedrals, residences for the priests and Levites which ministered in the sanctuary. And in

process of time fortifications were erected around them; so that the pile became, in some sort, a citadel within itself. But as Solomon designed it, the temple was a mere place of worship, resembling in all respects that fabric of curtains, and poles, and cords, over which, for many a day, the glory of God brooded in the wilderness. Many and gorgeous were the gifts which Solomon dedicated there to the Lord. The most precious of all was, however, the ark of the covenant, which, as soon as the place was made fit for its reception, the Levites brought forth with great pomp and joy out of Zion, and placed in a resting place, whence they trusted that it would never be removed.

B. C. 1004. — The ark having been placed within the veil, and the priests having ascertained that the tables of stone still lay within its shelter, though all the other memorials of past glories were departed, there fell upon the temple a cloud so dense, that no man who stood within its influence could see to go about his ordinary business. It was viewed by the king as a token that the Lord had been pleased to accept the offering thus made to him; and he proceeded to dedicate the pile, with all that it contained, by a series of solemn rites to Jehovah. Innumerable oxen, sheep, and goats were offered on the occasion; and throughout an entire week Jerusalem was a scene of religious feasting and gladness, such as had not been seen in Israel from the day of the deliverance out of Egypt.

B. C. 992. — Having accomplished this great work, and established such an order in the priesthood, as that the service of God should never stand still from morning till night, Solomon began to turn his attention to the embellishment of other parts of his dominions. He had wedded a daughter of the king

of Egypt, and having got with her, as a portion, the city of Geber, he proceeded to fortify it with great care, and to render it a sort of outpost on that flank of his dominions. He built ships, likewise, and in partnership with Hiram, king of Tyre, he traded to distant lands, and brought home gold from Ophir. So many gigantic undertakings could not, however, be carried on, without taxing to a large extent, both the property and the physical powers of his subjects; and Solomon, sagacious as he was, and skilful in the application of his vast resources, began, by degrees, to lose his popularity. Proud of him the Israelites might be. It flattered their vanity to see kings and queens coming from remote lands to learn wisdom from his discourses; but the pressure of the burdens which he laid upon them began at last to be felt, and the seeds of future mischief were sown. Moreover, the great and wise king being, like his father, a miserable slave of the body, formed connections which drew him by little and little into sin. He saw the daughters of Moab and Ammon, and of the Hittites, and other obnoxious races, that they were fair; and he gathered round him, as wives or as concubines, many hundreds of them. To pass from such a state of domestic existence to idolatry of the most impure kind, was a step which was scarcely to be avoided. The women first besought him that he would suffer them to worship according to the customs of their fathers, and they, by and by, prevailed upon him, weak, because he was sensual, to worship with them. Then began enemies from without, and false friends within, to trouble him. Hadad, the last survivor of the princely house of Midian, returned out of Egypt, whither he had been carried for shelter, and harassed Israel on one side; Eliadah, the successor

of Hadadezer, prince or king of Zobah, a district of Syria, threatened it on another; and, worse than all, Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, a lineal descendant of Joseph, began to plot against Solomon among his own people. Nor could it be concealed from Solomon, that God's anger had been stirred against him. Ahijah, one of that race of prophets which never ceased in Israel till the Babylonish captivity, made no secret of God's purposes to divide the kingdom in Jeroboam's favour; and though Jeroboam, by fleeing into Egypt, escaped the king's fury, the thought of evils about to come on him or on his posterity, darkened Solomon's mind as old age advanced on him.

B. C. 975. — Thus matters stood for many years. The wise king, whose judgments were quoted in distant lands, sank into folly among his own people. He wrote, indeed, like a philosopher, for the Books of Proverbs, of Ecclesiastes, and other treatises still extant, testify to his knowledge of men and of things. But he lived like one who has not learned to master himself, and he died in deep remorse, leaving but one son to preserve his name among men, and with the melancholy conviction on his mind that even of that youth he had been through life but too neglectful.

CHAP. XXVIII.

FIRST BOOK OF KINGS AND SECOND BOOK
OF CHRONICLES.

REHOBOAM. HIS UNWISE PROCEEDINGS. THE KING-
DOM DIVIDED. REHOBOAM KING OF JUDAH.
JEROBOAM KING OF ISRAEL. JEROBOAM'S SIN.
THE YOUNG PROPHET.

B. C. 975. — As soon as Solomon's funeral was ended, his son Rehoboam, then in his forty-second year, made haste to take up the reins of government. It would appear, however, that the law of succession was not, as yet, fully established in Israel. A confirmation by the people, in some shape or another, appears to have been necessary; at least we find that before acknowledging Rehoboam as their sovereign, the heads of tribes met at Shechem, a town in the province of Ephraim, and invited him to a conference there. At the same time intelligence of the death of the late king was forwarded to Jeroboam in Egypt, who lost no time in returning to his own place, and was in readiness to meet Rehoboam when he should arrive. It is not quite clear why Shechem should have been preferred to Jerusalem, as the scene of the projected gathering. Probably some latent jealousy of the power and influence of Judah stirred the remaining tribes, and perhaps Rehoboam would have acted with greater prudence, had he summoned the heads of families to meet him in the capital. But this he failed to do; and the greeting which awaited him at the place whither he proceeded to confer with his chiefs, taught him, when it was too late, that he had committed an error.

Jeroboam, from whose memory the salutation of the prophet had never passed away, became the mouth-piece of this meeting. He demanded, as a condition of acceptance of the new king, that he would lighten the public burdens; and did not object to Rehoboam's taking three days to consider the point. But the interval was unwisely spent by the king. He requested the advice of his father's counsellors, who recommended a conciliatory course; but acting on the suggestions of flatterers as inexperienced and heady as himself, he peremptorily refused to pledge himself to anything. Indeed, he went further: "He answered the people roughly, and spake to them after this manner: My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." No more was needed to blow up into a flame the embers of sedition which had long smouldered. With one accord the chiefs declared that they were bound by no tie of natural allegiance to the house of David; and departing from the assembly, set up Jeroboam to be their king.

With some difficulty Rehoboam escaped to Jerusalem: that city, with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, still adhered to him; and, encouraged by their protestations of loyalty, he made an attempt to win back the revolted tribes. He sent an officer of state to collect the ordinary taxes, as if no revolt had occurred. But the tribes took the king's envoy and stoned him to death, in token that they were prepared to maintain their own course at all hazards. An appeal was then made to the sword. A hundred and eighty thousand men took the field in Judah, and were already on their march, when a prophet called Shemaiah interposed, and in the name of

Jehovah forbade the unnatural strife. Accordingly Jeroboam, without opposition, became king of Israel, while Rehoboam and the house of David were forced to assume the title of kings of Judah.

We have now reached a period of sacred history, when the stream of events breaks off into two branches, — of which the channels are so interlaced by the chroniclers of old times, that it is not always easy to distinguish the one from the other. Rehoboam king of Judah, and Jeroboam king of Israel, began their reigns almost simultaneously. They mounted their respective thrones in the year B. C. 975. But while Jeroboam wore the crown two and twenty years, Rehoboam survived his accession only seventeen years; a difference which affects the chronology of the epoch just so far, as to render a perfect reconciliation of the occurrences that befell in both states somewhat difficult. Perhaps, therefore, I shall best consult the convenience of my readers, if as a general rule I confine my calculations in future to the annals of Judea. For Israel, though not absolutely cut off from the promises, became by the fact of its severance a distinct nation; and deserves ever after to be regarded, in its government, if not throughout all the arrangements of its society, as more than a semi-idolatrous state.

B. C. 975. — The first act of Jeroboam after his election by the ten tribes was to establish the seat of his government at Shechem; the next to set up stations for public worship, in order to prevent the periodical attendance of his subjects on the great national festivals at Jerusalem. With this view he consecrated at Dan and Bethel, on the northern and southern sides of his kingdom, golden calves, to represent the God who had brought the people out of the land of Egypt. And usurping to himself

the high priest's office, he offered upon altars erected before them costly sacrifices. We have no right to assume that Jeroboam intended more by this proceeding than that which he professed to seek. But to make of Jehovah "any likeness or similitude," was as contradictory of the second command in the Decalogue, as the practice of sacrificing or holding any of the national festivals, except in the place where the ark stood, was a breach of the ritual law delivered by Moses. His offence, therefore, if it scarcely deserve to be treated as idolatry, amounted to rebellion. And it led the way, as such beginnings always do, to crimes deeper and more debasing than itself. It did not long pass unreprieved; for there came from Judea, on the occasion of Jeroboam's first great festival, a young prophet, who foretold the subjugation at a future day, of Israel by Judah, under circumstances which deserve to be detailed at length.

B. C. 974. — The people of the ten tribes, though very immoral, were not at this time wholly given to idolatry. Many of them, including priests and Levites especially, refused to worship as the king directed; and one, an old prophet, dwelt with his family at Bethel, where Jeroboam conducted the profane festival of which I am speaking. The king was standing by his own altar, preparing to burn a sacrifice, when a voice from amid the throng exclaimed, "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burned upon thee." The king turned round, saw the intruder, and stretching out his hand towards him, commanded that he should be seized. But the words were yet

in his mouth when his arm dried up, and at the same moment the altar rent asunder, and the ashes that lay upon it were spilled.

Indignation at once gave place to fear in the king's mind. The crowd also which surrounded him was awe-struck, while in a lowly voice he entreated the prophet of Judah to pray for him, and bowed the head, when his hand was restored to him as before. But he could not prevail on the young prophet to become his guest. "It was charged him by the Lord, saying, eat no bread in Bethel, nor drink water, nor turn again by the way that he came," in token that between Jehovah's servants and a people who had forsaken his covenant there could be no social intercourse; and so the young prophet, having accomplished the mission on which he had been sent, mounted his ass and rode away.

It would have been well for him had his perseverance been equal to his courage. Weariness, however, and hunger, seem to have clouded his intellect; for he had not ridden far ere an old man from Bethel overtook him, and prevailed upon him, by a false tale of an angelic mission, to return and dine. The individual who perpetrated this cruel act was, like the man of Judah, a prophet.—a sure proof that the prophetic office was not always bestowed on persons morally upright before God. And no sooner was the meal concluded, than he avowed his cheat, and threatened his victim with the vengeance of Heaven. The threat was fulfilled,—for the wretched man being attacked by a lion that same night, was slain on the skirts of the desert. They brought back his body to Bethel and buried it there, the crafty old prophet charging it as a duty upon his sons, that when he died, his bones should be laid in the same grave with those of the stranger whom he had deceived to his ruin.

CHAP. XXIX.

FIRST BOOK OF KINGS AND SECOND BOOK
OF CHRONICLES—*continued.*REHOBAM'S IDOLATRY. HIS PUNISHMENT AND
DEATH. ABIJAM. ASA. JEHOSEPHAT.

B. C. 971. —WHILE Jeroboam thus began his reign with acts offensive both to God and man, Rehoboam applied himself to consolidate the wreck of his power; and was considerably strengthened by a large influx of priests and Levites from the territories of Israel into Judea. For Jeroboam, among other scandalous acts, slighted the house of Aaron and the tribe of Levi, and making priests of whomsoever he chose, provoked the men of the sacerdotal families to transfer their allegiance to his rival. And for several years the kingdom of Judah thrived. Its frontier towns were fortified; the army was put into a state of discipline, justice was dispensed with impartiality, and the king's sons, of whom he had many, supported him zealously. But Rehoboam inherited the strong passions of his fathers; and, accumulating wives and concubines from the neighbouring states, he first connived at their idolatrous practices, and then himself took part in them. It was to no purpose that Shemaiah the prophet warned him of his danger. His reason and conscience might acknowledge the justice of the reproof, but his passions over-mastered them; and the example set by the prince was universally followed among the people. Judah soon became more grovelling and sensual in its heathenism than Israel; and it reaped its reward.

B. C. 671. — Among other strange wives whom Solomon had married, was a daughter of the king of Egypt, and she seems to have been one of the most successful of the wise king's tempters in leading him into the pollutions of heathenism. Her father did not sit on his throne to the end of Solomon's reign: and his successor, Shishak — the head, as it appears, of a new dynasty — made war upon Judah. He prevailed in every encounter. One after another, the frontier towns fell; and Rehoboam met his counsellors in Jerusalem, vainly to consider how the march of the conqueror might be stayed. Again, Shemaiah reminded them of their apostacies, nor was to be scorned and driven away. A public fast and humiliation were ordered; and Shishak, moved to clemency by the entreaties of the king, spared the city. He exacted from it, however, a heavy ransom. All the gold and silver which David and Solomon had collected, including four hundred golden shields, which the body guard were accustomed on state occasions to wear, passed into the treasury of Egypt. But Jerusalem and the temple were spared; and throughout the residue of Rehoboam's reign, the formal worship of Jehovah was never again laid aside, nor the rites of heathenism sanctioned by the example of the monarch.

B. C. 960. — Meanwhile, the political idolatry of Jeroboam in Israel deepened by degrees into positive heathenism. A brief shock seems, indeed, to have been given to the king's conscience, by the withering of his hand and the overthrow of his altar. But time and the restoration of the limb wrought their accustomed effects, and he grew year by year more reckless. That he ever succeeded in convincing himself of the fables which he pressed

upon his people, is, however, contradicted by the fact, that in 957, he sent his wife, disguised, to inquire of Ahijah, a prophet of God, concerning the fate of his eldest son, then labouring under sickness. The prophet was blind and deaf through age. Yet he instantly recognised the queen under her disguise, and sent her home with a message of wrath. Her sick son died as soon as her foot passed the threshold of the palace; and the death of that youth left no room to doubt that the rest of the prophet's terrible foreshadowings would come to pass.

Though the first outbreak of hostility between Judah and Israel had been staid, grounds of quarrel were too numerous to permit the establishment of a lasting peace. On the contrary, war, with all its attendant miseries, soon broke out, and continued through the latter years of Rehoboam's life. It seems to have been of a very desultory nature, and proved more hurtful to Judah than to Israel. But when Rehoboam died, which he did in 958 B. C., a bolder policy was assumed by the men of Judah. The new king, Abijam, if he inherited his father's vices, seems to have possessed a far greater share both of courage and of conduct. He assembled a great army; marched against Jeroboam, and fought and won a decisive battle at Mount Ephraim. This he followed up with so much vigour, that Jeroboam could no longer keep the field. Various towns and frontier provinces passed from the vanquished to the victor, and a peace was concluded, which endured, without intermission, twelve years.

B. C. 955. — The reign of Abijam was short: it extended over three years only. That of his son and successor Asa reached to forty years, and was, upon the whole, both honourable and prosperous. It is recorded of him that "he did that which was

right in the eyes of the Lord his God," and the Lord his God blessed him with success in all his undertakings. Ten years of perfect peace gave him the opportunity of purging the land from the stain of idolatry; and when war came he met it boldly. A swarm of people from Ethiopia burst, about the year B. C. 942, into Judea. Their numbers were put down at a million of fighting men, and they came with chariots and horses innumerable. These Asa encountered, and overthrew with great slaughter, and enriched himself and his capital with the spoil of their camp. There was much rejoicing in the land, because of this deliverance, nor was its safety hazarded again for some time.

B. C. 930. — Asa had reigned five and thirty years, and was, perhaps, somewhat spoiled by prosperity, when the prospect of a second invasion from Israel too much alarmed him. Doubtless, the prince who led the invading force was no common man. His name was Baasha, and, by a successful conspiracy, he had at once displaced and extinguished the entire family of Jeroboam. But Asa ought to have remembered that God's people, so long as they continued true to God's worship, were safe from all enemies, as indeed the annals of his own times had shown. A few reverses at the outset of the campaign sufficed, however, to shake their confidence; and when Baasha began to fortify at Ramah, in Benjamin, with a view to hold Jerusalem in check, Asa was tempted, in an evil hour, to look abroad for succour. There reigned, at this time in Damascus, the capital of Syria, one Benhadad, a powerful monarch, and the ally both of Israel and of Judah. Him Asa induced by rich gifts to break his faith with Baasha; and an invasion by the Syrians soon compelled the Israelites

to retire from the frontier of Judah. But Asa's policy was not pleasing in God's sight. A prophet, by name Hanani, was commissioned to reprove the king, and to tell him that the nation would suffer for his deed. Asa did not receive the rebuke as he ought to have done. He threw the prophet into prison, and, becoming irritable in proportion as he felt that he had done wrong, he committed various acts of tyranny towards his people. The latter days of his life did not, therefore, fulfil the promise of his maturity. And being smitten with a sore disease in his legs, he died, after protracted suffering, in the forty-first year of his reign.

B. C. 914. — Asa was succeeded on the throne of Judah by Jehoshaphat his son, a man of rare piety and virtue. He had reached the age of thirty-five when his father died, and he reigned, with honour to himself and advantage to his country, five and twenty years. His life seems to have been devoted to the improvement of the morals and the manners of his people. All heathen rites and customs he put down with a strong hand, and he employed learned and zealous persons to go about from town to town, instructing the inhabitants in the religion of Jehovah. Throughout the whole extent of his reign Judah suffered nothing from the assaults of a foreign enemy. The Philistines, who had planned a revolt, shrank from the enterprise, and paid him tribute. The Arabians sent him yearly gifts of sheep and goats, in token of their good will. In one particular only Jehoshaphat committed a grave error, — for he sent for the daughter of Ahab, king of Israel, to be the wife of his son Jehoram. It may be well if I take advantage of this state of repose in Judah, to sketch with a rapid pen the revolutions that had occurred or were then passing in Israel.

CHAP. XXX.

FIRST BOOK OF KINGS AND SECOND BOOK
OF CHRONICLES — *continued.*

REVOLUTIONS IN ISRAEL. JEROBOAM. NADAB.
BAASHA. ELAH. ZIMRI. OMRI. AHAB. ELIJAH
THE PROPHET.

ON the death of Jeroboam, B. C. 930, Nadab his son succeeded to the throne. The reign of this prince, of whom it is recorded that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord," was very short; it scarcely reached to two years; for Baasha, an officer of rank, conspired against him and slew him in his camp before Gibbethon. This blow the conspirator followed up by putting to death, without mercy, all who belonged to the line of Jeroboam; and then he seized the crown. He wore it three and twenty years, almost all of which were spent amid wars and perplexities; and left it at his death to Elah his son. But Elah's arm was too feeble to sustain so heavy a burden. Zimri, a general of cavalry, slew him, ere he had reigned two years, and destroyed himself within seven days after the perpetration of the act. Then arose a civil war between two factions, that of Tibni and that of Omri, neither of whom was in the most remote degree connected by blood with the royal line. It ended in favour of Omri, who went beyond the worst of his predecessors in the extravagance and enormity of his idolatry; nevertheless, he made himself a name by building the city of Samaria, and transferring thither the seat of government in Israel.

Five years thus witnessed in Israel three bloody revolutions leading to three changes of dynasty,

and five separate reigns. That of Omri reached to ten years; and (in B. C. 910) he died in his bed, leaving the kingdom to his son Ahab. Now, of Ahab it is recorded that he "did evil in the sight of the Lord, above all that went before him." Not content with adhering to the customs of Jeroboam and of Omri, he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Zidon, and added to all the other impure superstitions of the day the worship of Baal. It was with the daughter of this pair that Jehoshaphat king of Judah unfortunately became connected, and both he and his country had good cause to rue the proceeding.

The influence of the court being exerted to foster and encourage idolatry, idolatry soon became prevalent through all circles in Israel. Jehovah was openly renounced, and before the unholy shrines of Baal the most loathsome vices were perpetrated. In proof of the extent to which apostasy was carried, the annals of the kingdom relate that one Hiel, as if in defiance of God's revealed will, set himself in this reign to rebuild the walls of Jericho. He fulfilled his task, but he did so at the expense of the penalty which Joshua had imposed. His eldest son died the same day that he laid the foundation stone, and his youngest and last lived only to see his father's impious work completed.

From the days of Samuel downwards there were never wanting in either division of Israel a class of men of whom frequent mention is made, under the general appellation of prophets. Their influence over society made itself more or less felt, according to the moral and religious condition of the ages in which they lived. In Judah they appear to have been almost always treated with respect. In Israel, where the government promoted idolatry for its

own sake, their career was less triumphant. But they never suffered greater persecution than under king Ahab. He had no mercy upon them. Wherever they strove to execute the duties of their office they were summarily dealt with; and indeed, had his orders been obeyed to the letter, the prophetic order must have been rooted out in his day.

Fallen as Israel was, there were yet a few good men left, — “seven thousand knees,” as we read, “which had not bowed to Baal,” and more than one person of rank and wealth belonged to the number. One of these is especially mentioned in the Bible, — “Obadiah, the steward of the king’s household,” as having saved above a hundred of God’s prophets, by hiding them in caves, and feeding them with bread and water.

Ahab was in the full career of his guilt, when from the town of Tishbi in Gilead, of the tribe of Gad, there went forth to reprove him, and to be God’s instrument in the punishment of his people, one of the most illustrious prophets of whom mention is made in the Bible. Of the family and early career of this remarkable man nothing on which we can depend has been told. We know only that his name was Elijah, a word signifying “the Lord my God is he,” and that the spirit of God rested upon him in larger measure than upon any other of the Lord’s servants since Moses. But to the reproofs of Elijah Ahab paid no regard; and more than reproof followed. Nowise daunted by what he heard of the king’s cruelties, the prophet sought him out; and in the presence of his courtiers thus addressed him: “As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these three years, but according to my word.”

Doubtless the manner of the prophet awed

the king. Doubtless, too, God took care of his servant ; but no sooner was Elijah withdrawn from Ahab's presence, than the necessity of escape and concealment became manifest to him. He fled into the wild country near the Jordan ; and, in a cave beside the brook Cherith, found shelter. Here he dwelt many days, drinking of the brook and eating the morsels of bread and flesh, which flights of ravens brought away every morning and evening from innumerable out-of-door altars on which sacrifices to Baal were continually smoking. At last, however, the brook dried up ; and Elijah, by God's directions, descended to the plains. He travelled to Zarephath, a town within the territories of Sidon ; and met at the gate a widow woman, of whom he besought food and lodging. The poor woman assured him that all her food was expended. She had nothing except a handful of meal in a barrel, and a single cruse of oil within her doors, and she was then looking for a few sticks, that she might dress the morsel for her son and herself, and that having eaten it, they might die. The prophet desired her to dress first for him, and assured her that she should never want. She did so, and received him into her dwelling ; and "the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, till the Lord sent rain upon the land." Nor did God's blessing end there. After Elijah had been about two years her guest, her only child died suddenly, and the poor woman, in the agony of her grief, said bitter things to the prophet. But he resented them not. On the contrary, he prayed that the child's soul might return, and his prayer was heard.

B. C. 907. — Meanwhile, there was extreme distress throughout Israel. Rivers, streams, fountains,

all dried up. The cattle died for lack of pasture, and bread to sustain human life failed, — when, at the end of about three years, Elijah received a command from God to go and show himself to Ahab. He went, and being met on the road by the good Obadiah, he directed him to arrange a meeting with the king, and assured him that he would not fail to be at the place appointed.

The meeting took place, for Ahab at once sought out the prophet. It was a stormy one at first ; but it led to an agreement that the question of the divided faith of the nation should be submitted to a fair trial. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to meet him on Mount Carmel. Each party was to make ready there an altar and an offering ; though neither should be permitted to apply fire to the pile ; and the God who answered by consuming his own sacrifice, would at once be accepted as the God of Israel. Four hundred prophets of Baal came to the place appointed, and the king, with an immense multitude followed, to watch the result. Altars were built, wood strewn, bullocks slaughtered, divided, and laid on the pile, and for six long hours Baal's priests prayed, without receiving an answer. Elijah mocked them as they cried and cut themselves with knives and lancets : "Your God is asleep, you must awake him ; he is on a journey, you must call him back ;" and then his turn came. He waited till the time of the evening sacrifice, and, to make security doubly sure, he caused many buckets of water to be poured on his altar and his sacrifice. Then he prayed, and immediately fire fell from heaven and consumed the whole. There was no resisting evidence like this ; so the multitude exclaimed, with one accord, "The Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God." But Elijah was not satisfied

with so barren a triumph. He caused the whole of Baal's prophets to be slain on the spot, and then told the king that he should have rain. It came in torrents, and Israel was saved.

Though the people were satisfied, Jezebel the queen was not. A bigoted idolater, she made no secret of her intention to slay Elijah, whenever he might fall into her hands; and he was compelled again to flee for his life into the desert. There God made himself manifest to his worshipper by various signs; and commissioned him to perform various acts of service. But for these the times were not yet ripe, so Elijah dwelt apart, and no one had intercourse with him.

CHAP. XXXI.

FIRST BOOK OF KINGS AND SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES—*continued.*

NABOTH'S VINEYARD. DEATH OF AHAB.

B.C. 901.—WHILE Elijah thus dwelt alone with God, war broke out anew between Israel and Syria, and Ben-hadad, advancing with a great army, placed Samaria in a state of siege. His want of vigilance seems, however, to have been as gross as his habits were brutal; for he permitted himself to be surprised when carousing in his tent, and his troops were cut to pieces. Ahab does not appear to have followed up his success with vigour, so Ben-hadad returned in the following year, and was again defeated. Not even yet had the king of Israel learned, that leniency is misplaced where public enemies lack honour. He consented unwisely to a peace on the sole condition that Ben-hadad would

restore to him the frontier cities which he had taken, and among the rest Ramoth-gilead, a place of considerable strength and much political importance. But Ben-hadad never entertained the idea of fulfilling this part of his engagements. Ramoth-gilead was valuable to him as well as to Ahab; and from day to day, on one pretext or another, he deferred withdrawing his garrison from it. Meanwhile other events befell of a more domestic character, which demand notice.

In the district of Jezreel, not many miles from Samaria, Ahab had a palace; and near it lay a vineyard belonging to a person called Naboth, which the king greatly desired to purchase and inclose. Naboth, however, refused to part with the inheritance of his family; and Ahab did not dare to take it from him by force. For corrupt as Israel had become, the forms of law were still respected in its courts, and the king would have provoked a rebellion had he set them at defiance. Under these circumstances, his wife Jezebel persuaded him to suborn false witnesses; and Naboth being convicted on their testimony of blaspheming God and the king, was carried outside the city, and stoned to death. Hereupon Ahab secured the vineyard as a forfeited estate and attached it to his own grounds.

B. C. 899. — He had gone down to look at his newly acquired property, and was walking in the vineyard, when Elijah suddenly confronted him. Their meeting was brief and stern: "Hast thou found me, oh mine enemy?" demanded the king. "I have found thee," was the reply: "Where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth they shall lick thine; and by dogs also shall Jezebel be eaten, near the wall of Jezreel." Terrified at the bold and solemn manner

of the prophet, the king not only made no reply, but he put on sackcloth, and humbled himself. Nevertheless the sum of his iniquities was complete, and punishment came in due time upon him.

B. C. 897.—It was about this time that war was renewed between Israel and Syria. It continued three years, and was still in progress, when Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to visit his allies and connections in Samaria. Ahab was in the act of preparing an expedition for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead, and Jehoshaphat agreed, after a slight demur, to attend him into the field. But no good came of the enterprise. In the battle which ensued, Ahab received a mortal wound, and Jehoshaphat with difficulty escaped amid the wreck of the defeated army. The Israelites carried Ahab, bleeding and faint, to his summer house at Jezreel, where he died. And the dogs literally drank his blood, as it fell on the road and was accumulated in the pool beside Naboth's vineyard, where the servants washed the chariot.

Ahab left the throne of Israel to his son Ahaziah, and with it the burden of sins in which the young man had been too faithfully reared.

CHAP. XXXII.

SECOND BOOKS OF KINGS AND OF CHRONICLES.

JEHORAM KING OF JUDAH. AHAB KING OF ISRAEL. ELIJAH, AND ELISHA, THE PROPHETS.

B. C. 897.—THE events recorded in the preceding chapter occurred in the seventeenth year of the reign

of Jehoshaphat king of Judah : they made a deep impression upon his mind, and though it was too late to undo the evil which had been done in the alliance between his eldest son and the daughter of Ahab, Jehoshaphat strove as far as possible to guard against the consequences. He more and more devoted himself to the rooting out of idolatry and the instruction of the people, by public teachers, in God's law. It was a measure as prudent as it was righteous, for God forsook him not to the end of his days. When all his neighbours, the Moabites, Edomites, and the people of Seir, combined against him, God caused such differences to arise among themselves, that they destroyed one another, after they had taken the field, without once forcing the troops of Judah to strike a blow. The booty which was collected from the spoil of the slaughtered chiefs well nigh made up for the loss of the treasure wherewith Asa had purchased the safety of Jerusalem from the king of Egypt, and during the rest of Jehoshaphat's reign the land had peace.

B. C. 889. — On the death of this good king, the sceptre passed to his eldest son, Jehoram. This young man had reached the thirty-third year of his age, and he was not slow in giving proof of the spirit which swayed him. He put the whole of his brothers, six in number, to death, and resigning himself absolutely to the guidance of Athaliah, his wife, filled the land with altars and images of Baal. He drew tighter, likewise, the alliance between Judah and Israel, sending succours to the latter in her wars against Syria. But a general revolt of all the neighbouring tribes who had paid his father tribute, forced him to look ere long to dangers nearer home : against these he made head but imperfectly ; and he died of a painful and lingering disease, ere peace was in any measure restored.

Meanwhile the state of Israel was lamentable in the extreme. Ahaziah, the successor of Ahab, surpassed his father in the enormity of his idolatries, and possessed little of his personal courage or conduct. Moab rebelled against him and defied his power, which, indeed, he had no time to exert; for he had not completed the second year of his reign, when an accident cut it short. He fell, one day, through a lattice or window into the court, and received a severe injury. Anxious about himself, he sent to inquire of Beelzebub, the god of Ekron, whether he might not survive; and became furious when the messenger, returning almost immediately, informed him that he could not. "Who told you?" said the king. "A venerable man, arrayed in a garment of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins." "It is Elijah the prophet," exclaimed the sick man. "Send and smite him, or bring him here." Two companies, each of fifty men, were ordered, in succession, to perform this task; and they perished, one after the other, by fire. A third went out; and the officer humbling himself before the prophet, begged and obtained his own life and the lives of his men. But the king gained nothing by his folly. Elijah came to the palace; upbraided Ahaziah with his idolatry, and told him that he should not recover. He died the same night, and left the throne to his brother Joram.

This Joram, or Jehoram (for the word is spelt both ways), ascended the throne ere Jehoshaphat king of Judah died. And he was assisted by Jehoshaphat, as well as by the Edomites, the tributaries to Judah, in re-establishing his authority over Moab. But the expedition, though it succeeded, was one of extreme danger and difficulty,

because the march of the allied troops carried them through the sandy deserts, where, but for the advice of Elisha the prophet, who accompanied them, they would have perished to a man. They dug deep trenches in the sand, into which the water filtered, and so saved their lives. But Joram soon forgot both the goodness of God and the momentary feeling of gratitude to which so remarkable a deliverance gave birth. He was not indeed, like his father, a worshipper of Baal; but the sins of Jeroboam he failed to take away; and his reign, besides being occupied in constant struggles, was in consequence cut short at the end of twelve years. It was during this interval that certain events befell, which must not be passed by unnoticed.

Elijah the prophet, when hiding in the desert from Ahab and Jezebel, had received, it will be borne in mind, various commissions from God. Some of these, though given in direct terms to himself, could hardly be executed except by his successor; and Elijah, therefore, seems to have done all that was required of him, in the appointment of Elisha to become the great prophet of Israel in his room. He found this man ploughing in the field. He cast his mantle upon him; and Elisha, comprehending the purpose of the act, left his plough in the furrow and followed the man of God. He then learned all that God had given him to execute, and he braced himself to do his duty.

Elisha and Elijah do not appear to have been always or even much together. On the contrary, the former, after being fully instructed in the part which he should be required to play, returned for a season to the college in Gilgal; and gave himself up, as was then the custom with prophets-elect, to private meditation and frequent prayer.

He was thus employed when, on a certain day, in the beginning of the reign of Joram, Elijah came to salute him. They proceeded together round the various seminaries, that the venerable Elijah might take leave of the students, and then bent their steps towards the Jordan. Here Elijah would have parted from Elisha, but the latter would not. He insisted on sharing his master's fortunes to the end; and Elijah, thus importuned, permitted him to walk at his side. They reached the margin of the stream; and Elijah smiting the water with his cloak, it parted asunder, and they crossed dry shod. They moved a little deeper into the wilderness, when suddenly a vision appeared in the air as of a chariot of fire with horses. "My father, my father," exclaimed Elisha, as he gazed upwards, "the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." The words were still in his mouth when Elijah mounted the car, and a whirlwind carried him out of the sight of his companion. In token, however, that God's spirit was not withdrawn from him, Elijah let fall his mantle on Elisha; and the latter, recrossing the Jordan, set about the performance of the great work to which he had been thus marvellously called.

B.C. 881. — Many wonderful things are recorded of Elisha. He conferred upon Jericho the benefit of fresh water, and taught the people how to render the land in its vicinity fruitful. He punished the people of Bethel, famous for their idolatries, by causing certain of their children who mocked him to be torn in pieces by bears. He delivered the sons of a poor widow from slavery, by miraculously supplying her with the means of paying a heavy debt. He besought God for a lady whose charities were very extensive, and God gave her a son, the one

blessing which she lacked; and, by and by, when the child died suddenly, Elisha restored him. But perhaps the most instructive of his acts was the punishment of his servant Gehazi;—it befell in this manner.

There was war between Syria and Israel, and, during a predatory excursion, a body of Syrian troops carried off a Hebrew maiden, whom they gave to Naaman, their general. Now Naaman was a leper; and not all the rude skill of Syria could effect his cure. The Hebrew maiden, however, informed her mistress that there was a prophet in Israel who could do all things. And letters were immediately written to the king of Israel, beseeching him to take away the leprosy from Naaman. As was to be expected, the king of Israel read this demand with mingled indignation and fear. Nevertheless, Elisha came to his assistance; and Naaman, the captain of the Syrian host, was told that if he desired to be healed, he must come and make his obeisance to the prophet.

Naaman came, and a royal company came with him. He conceived that he did the prophet honour: and when Elisha, without so much as going forth to greet him, sent a message to the effect that, by washing seven times in Jordan, the malady would be removed, the proud warrior spurned the counsel, and turned away in a rage. His servants prevailed upon him, however, to do as the prophet had desired, and the cure was complete. Immediately his gratitude became as intense as the angry feeling which preceded it had been warm. He hurried back to the prophet,—besought him to accept a rich present,—and though Elisha steadily refused, declared himself a convert to the worship of Jehovah.

Naaman departed, carrying with him a mule's burden of the soil of Israel, in order that he might set up an altar thereon, and pray to Jehovah, where, as he superstitiously imagined, the anger of the gods of Syria would not be able to reach him. But Gehazi, Elisha's servant, grudged that all the munificent offers which the Syrian had made should have been rejected. He no sooner withdrew from his master's presence, than he stole out of the house, and running after Naaman, deceived him with a tale that strangers had come unexpectedly to claim Elisha's hospitality. The Syrian pressed rich gifts upon him and departed.

Two of Naaman's people carried the silver and the raiment, which Gehazi received, as far as the door of the house where Elisha dwelt. There the artful Israelite dismissed them; and after bestowing his treasure where he imagined that it would be safe, he presented himself before Elisha. "And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither. And he said unto him, Went not my heart with thee when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants? The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow."

By these and other wonderful works like them, Elisha established his claim to be accepted as God's prophet. He acquired also great influence over Joram, whom political considerations, rather than a disbelief in the supreme power of Jehovah, retained in the semi-idolatrous religion of Jeroboam; and

he repeatedly interfered to save that prince from destruction. On two or three separate occasions he hindered the king from being surprised by ambuscades which the Syrians had laid for him; and at last, when Samaria was besieged, he stayed to share the privations to which his countrymen were subjected. Nor were they of an ordinary kind. Famine pressed the devoted city sore: indeed to such a pitch of distress were the inhabitants reduced, that women killed and ate their own children. It was in the depth of this extremity that Elisha assured the king and his nobles that relief would shortly come. And it did come that night. The Israelites set their watches as usual. The rest tried to sleep off their misery: and in the morning when they arose strange tidings greeted them. Four wretched lepers, thrust as usual without the gate, had gone, under the pressure of intense hunger, to seek food or speedy death in the Syrian camp. They found the tents standing, with cattle, horses, provisions, and stores in abundance. But not a man was there to guard them. A sudden panic had fallen upon the host, and it fled.

Some time after this, when Elisha, whose profession seems to have shielded him from danger wherever he went, visited Damascus, Ben-hadad the king lay sick; and hearing that the prophet was come, he sent Hazael, the commander-in-chief of his forces, to inquire whether or not he might expect to recover. Now among other matters charged upon Elijah was this: that by himself or by his successor, he should anoint Hazael to be king of Syria; and Elisha felt as soon as the officer approached him, that the moment for fulfilling this injunction was come. He foresaw, at the same time, that Hazael, as king of Syria, would work

greater ill to Israel than Ben-hadad had done; and after gazing upon him for some time, he burst into tears. "Go back and tell your master," said he, "that his disease is not mortal. Nevertheless I tell you that he will die: and I weep because I know that thou wilt cruelly oppress my people when the power comes into thy hands." Hazael, though he spoke like one who resented such a charge, went away full of dark thoughts. He faithfully delivered so much of the prophet's message to Ben-hadad as seemed to promise a prolongation of his life, and on the morrow he murdered him. He seized the empty throne, and became a bitter enemy to Israel.

CHAP. XXXIII.

SECOND BOOKS OF KINGS AND OF CHRONICLES — *continued.*

AHAZIAH KING OF JUDAH. JEHU KING OF ISRAEL.
ATHALIAH'S USURPATION. JEHOASH KING OF
JUDAH. AMAZIAH. UZZIAH.

B.C. 884. — WHILE these events were passing in Israel, Joram, the wicked and idolatrous son of Jehoshaphat, ended his life and his reign together. He died in the fortieth year of his age, having held the sceptre eight years, and was succeeded by Ahaziah, the son who had been born to him of Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab king of Israel. So near a relationship between the two reigning families led, as was natural, to frequent and familiar intercourse; and Ahaziah was scarcely crowned ere

he made a journey to Samaria, for the purpose of receiving the congratulations of his uncle. But he came at an unfortunate season. Jehoram lay ill of wounds which he had received in a second attempt to wrest Ramoth-gilead from the Syrians: and Ahaziah, as he had adopted the impious man's religion, so he put himself in the way of becoming a partaker in his punishment.

The decree which doomed the family of Ahab to extinction, though suspended for a season, had not been recalled. The time was now come for carrying it into effect; and a young prophet received instructions from Elisha to proceed to the camp, and there to anoint a tried soldier, called Jehu, king of Israel. The young man went upon his errand, and finding Jehu surrounded by the chiefs of the army, took him apart and did to him as Elisha had desired. Probably Jehoram had lost by this time the favour of his troops. Probably there was that in the young prophet's manner which forced upon the generals a conviction that he came from God. But however this might be, the chiefs accepted Jehu as their king, and the revolution was complete. Jehu, however, looked beyond the adhesion of the troops. He did not know how far the people might confirm the choice, and he was resolved that, at all events, a leader should be wanting to them. With this view he mounted his chariot, and at the head of a chosen band hurried towards Jezreel, hoping, that before any rumour could reach king Jehoram's ear, he might be able to anticipate resistance. He succeeded according to his wish; for though his approach was notified by the watchmen on the tower, and Jehoram sent scouts on horseback to question his designs, Jehu compelled them one after another to fall into his train. At last king Jehoram him-

self set out to ascertain the cause of a proceeding so mysterious, and Ahaziah bore him company. They rode each in his chariot, but were scarcely arrived within ear-shot of the throng when the truth became apparent to them. They turned to flee, but it was too late. Jehu drew a bow with all his strength, and drove an arrow between the shoulders and through the heart of Jehoram, while Ahaziah, sorely wounded also, reached Megiddo with some difficulty and there died.

Jehoram's body was thrown, by Jehu's command, into Naboth's vineyard. He himself rode on, and entering the town saw Jezebel, the mother of the slaughtered prince, looking from a window, and covering him with reproaches. He desired that she should be cast down, and his word was instantly obeyed. She fell in the street and was trodden under the hoofs of the horses. Moreover, when the same evening he sent out people to take up the body and bury it, they found but her skull and the palms of her hands. So perfectly was Elijah's threat to Ahab fulfilled, as regarded both that king himself and his miserable wife. Dogs lapped Ahab's blood in the portion or vineyard of Naboth, and dogs ate Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

B. C. 884.—Having thus deposed and slain his master, Jehu proceeded to render his own hold upon the throne secure by putting to death every member of Ahab's family, to the number of seventy persons. Neither was he more merciful to the kindred of the king of Judah; for he beheaded not fewer than forty of them whom he encountered on the road near Samaria, whither they were proceeding. Moreover Jehu's zeal against the priests and worshippers of Baal knew no bounds. He slew them without mercy wherever he found them, and

was unscrupulous in the expedients which he devised for getting them into his power. From one great sin, however, he lacked strength of faith sufficient to turn away. Like all his predecessors, he dreaded the effect of a free religious intercourse between his own subjects and the people of Judea; and he therefore continued to sacrifice before the golden calves which Jeroboam had set up. For this God punished him by strengthening the hands of his enemies in war. His reign was indeed a long one, for it extended over twenty-eight years; and it cannot be described as either unhappy or inglorious: but from it we may date the decline of the kingdom of Israel, which, especially in the provinces situated beyond the Jordan, began under him to suffer curtailment.

B. C. 878. — Meanwhile in Judah revolutions took place scarcely less remarkable than those which shook Israel to its centre. On the death of Ahaziah, his mother Athaliah, the idolatrous daughter of Ahab, and sister of Jehoram, determined to secure the crown for herself. With this view she gave orders to put to death in one day all the children whom another wife had borne to her late husband; and the massacre being perfected, she assumed, without hesitation, the rights and privileges of sovereignty. But one great rival had escaped her. Ahaziah left an infant son, whom his aunt, the wife of Jehoiada the high priest, concealed, and whom the high priest, a man both of talent and sincere piety, brought up with his own children. Him Jehoiada kept back till the queen's tyranny and many vices had thoroughly disgusted the people; and even then he did not dare to communicate his plans except to a few. At the proper moment, however, he armed the Levites who waited in the temple.

With these he attacked the queen when she was not prepared, and having overpowered her guards and slain herself, he proclaimed Jehoash king. Full proof was at the same time afforded of the child's lineal descent from David; and, though he had attained only to his seventh year, he was accepted by the nation with joy.

B. C. 965.—As long as Jehoiada lived, the affairs of Judah were conducted with exceeding skill and care. The temple, which for many years had been neglected, underwent a thorough repair. The order of worship was restored, and the law executed rigidly; indeed, except that "the high places" seem not to have been taken away, nothing which it behoved the representative of Jehovah to effect was left unaccomplished. But, in process of time, Jehoiada died. The king gradually fell away from his uprightness; and the inevitable consequences of apostacy followed. The Syrians invaded Judea. They defeated the armies of Jehoash in the field, took his frontier towns, and were staid in their march upon Jerusalem itself, only by the surrender of all the treasures which years of saving had accumulated. At last the people grew restless under the government of one whose manhood had so grievously belied the promise of his youth; and a conspiracy being entered into, he was murdered by two of his principal servants. But as there was no purpose of setting aside the line of David, to which the tribes of Judah and Benjamin continued loyal to the last, Amaziah, the son of the murdered prince, ascended the throne without opposition. Jehoash reigned in all forty years.

B. C. 839.—Contemporary in Israel with Jehoash, king of Judah, were Jehu, his son Jehohaz, and his grandson Joash. Of Jehu I have already given an

account; and of Jehohaz there is little to say, except that "he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." Hazael, king of Syria, and Ben-hadad, the son and successor of that prince, harassed him in consequence with continual wars, and reduced him to such a depth of poverty and weakness, that of all the numerous armies with which he first took the field he could muster no more than ten thousand infantry and fifty horse. His son, Jehoash, though adhering to the worship which Jeroboam had set up, conducted matters with better fortune. He defeated Ben-hadad in three great battles, and recovered most of the frontier towns which the Syrians had wrested from his father. He carried on war, likewise, not unsuccessfully against Judah; but perhaps the most memorable event in his reign was the death of Elisha the prophet. That great man, after a long life spent in contention with the priests and worshippers of Baal, died in the presence of the king, towards whom he appears to have entertained a warm regard, and who came to visit him in his last sickness. He was buried, according to the customs of his country, in a cave beyond the walls of Samaria.

B. C. 827.—Jehoash had filled the throne of Israel two years, when Amaziah succeeded to that of Judah. He was a good, but apparently a weak man, who, while giving countenance only to the worship of Jehovah, lacked firmness enough to put down the altars of Baal with a high hand. He found the Edomites in rebellion, and distrusted his own power to reduce them; he therefore hired a hundred thousand of the troops of Israel to help him; but repenting of the arrangement, dismissed the Israelites again ere they reached the Edomite border. As might have been expected, these people, in sheer disgust, plun-

dered the towns and villages of Judah that lay in their march homewards; and the consequence was a renewal of the hostile feeling which had begun to give place to amity between the two countries.

Amaziah was successful in his campaign against the Edomites. He was less fortunate in the issues of a quarrel which he fastened upon Jehoash, king of Israel. For he not only sustained a signal defeat in the field, but had the humiliation to witness Jerusalem itself in the hands of the Israelites. The Israelites did not, however, destroy the city; they contented themselves with plundering the temple, and breaking down a large portion of the town wall, and marching away, left Amaziah to make what head he could against a growing unpopularity. It was of too formidable a nature for so weak a prince to withstand. A conspiracy was formed against him, and at the town of Lachish, in Philistia, whither he had fled from his own capital, he was overtaken and put to death. He reigned in all nine and twenty years.

B. C. 810.—From the year 820 up to 809 or 810, the government of Judah was carried on by an aristocracy. No attempt was indeed made to innovate upon the constitution, or to break the royal line; but Uzziah, the king's son, had attained only to his fifth year at the period of his father's death, and till he reached the age of sixteen, guardians acted for him. He then took upon himself the burden of public affairs, and for half a century bore them with much credit. He waged successful war with the Philistines, the Arabs, and the Egyptians. He reduced the Ammonites to servitude, and rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, stored that, and every other stronghold in the kingdom, with arms. Nor was he less attentive to the operations of peace. In his

reign the agriculture of Judea seems to have been carried to a high state of perfection. In one respect, however, he greatly erred; and he was signally punished for his error. As if continued success had unsettled his reason, he ventured, on a certain occasion, to invade the priest's office, and in spite of the resistance of the Levites on duty, he forced his way into the holy place. He was immediately smitten with leprosy; and being thereby cut off from all familiar intercourse with men, he hid himself in a separate dwelling, and appointed his son Jotham to act for him. He did not long survive this calamity, and though buried in the field where his ancestors lay, was not honoured by having his dust mingled with theirs.

CHAP. XXXIV.

SECOND BOOKS OF KINGS AND OF CHRONICLES—*continued.*

KINGS OF ISRAEL — JEROBOAM II. ANARCHY.
ZACHARIAH. SHALLUM. MENAHEM. PEKAHIAH.
PEKAH. KINGS OF JUDAH — UZZIAH. JOTHAM.
AHAZ.

WHILE the line of David was thus wonderfully preserved in unbroken succession on the throne of Judah, in Israel a continuance of those bloody revolutions went on, which beginning after the death of Jeroboam, ended only with the final dispersion of the ten tribes. Doubtless the house of Jehu retained its hold upon the throne during four

generations ; such had been God's promise to the founder of the family ; and on the death of Jehohaz, Jeroboam II., the great grandson of Jehu, mounted without opposition the vacant chair. Moreover, being an able, though an impious man, he kept his seat longer than any of his predecessors ; and by his successes in war, he in a great measure renewed the glories of earlier and better times. He won back the old boundaries of Israel from his neighbours, and caused his will to be respected far beyond the actual limits of the kingdom. But he took no steps to root out the sin of idolatry in the land itself. Hence, whatever amount of fear he might excite among those over whom he reigned, the principles of love and of loyalty were wanting, and the consequence was, that after his demise, there occurred in all quarters revolts and confusions, which kept the nation in a state of anarchy for rather more than twenty years, and prepared it for a final overthrow.

B. C. 771.—Wearied out, at length, by intestine divisions, the chiefs of parties in Israel agreed to acknowledge as their sovereign, Zachariah, the son of the late king. He mounted the throne in the thirtieth year of the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in sixth months disgusted by his folly and his crimes the very persons who had been mainly instrumental in his advancement. An officer called Shallum took advantage of his unpopularity to slay the king and seize the crown ; and was himself slain in his turn by Menahem, captain of the king's guard. But Menahem had no better hold upon the sceptre than his immediate predecessor. An enemy more powerful than any with whom either Israel or Judah had yet been called upon to contend, was moving against him, and resistance seemed

vain. He therefore tried to effect by largess what he could not accomplish by force of arms; and by laying a heavy tax on his nobles, so disgusted them, that the residue of his brief reign was passed amid continual difficulties and dangers. It will be necessary to the right understanding of much which is to follow, that I should briefly inform my readers of the condition, at this time, of some of the more important of the empires with which Judah and Israel were forced into connection.

Apart from the smaller states, such as the confederations of the Philistines, the Edomites, the Moabites, the Amorites, and so forth, we find the chosen people, at various stages in their annals, coming into contact, for good or for evil, with the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Syrians. Of the Egyptians it is unnecessary to say much. Though subject, like other nations, to frequent changes of dynasty, they continued, down to the days of Uzziah and later, pretty much as we found them when Joseph and his brethren dwelt in Goshen. Not habitually a warlike people, they were yet, from time to time, governed by warlike princes, who led them forth to conquest abroad, or else fought to repel the different enemies by whom they were invaded. We find them, more than once, at strife with the Israelites, especially after the overthrow of Solomon's father-in-law. But, generally speaking, their relations with the latter were friendly.

The Syrian empire seems to have arisen out of a combination of many small tribes, which came by degrees under one head, and grew into a considerable state. Ben-hadad the First, Hazael, and Ben-hadad the Second, appear to have carried the empire to the extreme height of its power. Their

capital was Damascus; and, as the course of our history has already shown, their intercourse both with Judah and with Israel was frequent.

Babylonia and Assyria constituted, for many ages, distinct portions of the one immense Chaldean empire. Of this Nimrod was the founder. He fixed his capital in Babylon, where the famous tower or citadel of Babel long stood; and built, a few years subsequently, in Assyria, Nineveh, to be the residence of his son Ninus. And for about 225 years the Chaldean dynasty, descended from Nimrod, kept its place. It then gave way to a family of Arabs, who filled the throne about 215 years, not only not losing a single province all the while, but, from age to age, adding to their number. But about the year B.C. 2114 a revolution occurred, which first of all severed the Assyrian from the Babylonish provinces, and by and by re-united them in an order the reverse of that which originally held good. Nineveh thenceforth became the capital, and the whole received the name of the Assyrian empire.

Thus matters stood till about the year B.C. 841, when a family which had reigned through six-and-thirty generations, became worn out. A Median soldier, by name Abaris, then seized the throne, and that intercourse began between the Assyrians and the chosen people which was destined ere long to operate powerfully in the furtherance of God's great purpose towards mankind.

It was during the reign of this Abaris that Jonah the prophet visited Nineveh, and called its people to repentance. Pul, the son of Abaris, played, however, a more important part than his father, in the drama of Israel's fortunes; and having brought the reader down to the accession of that prince, I

resume the thread of sacred history at the point where, a short time ago, we dropped it.

B.C. 771. — Uziah (or Azariah, for the names are indifferently used) had occupied the throne of Judah nine-and-thirty years, when Menahem, the son of Gadi, made himself master of that of Israel. It is recorded of him that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord," and that Pul, the king of Assyria, came up against him. We are not told how the quarrel between these princes originated; but Menahem found himself unable to resist the invasion. He was therefore glad to purchase the retreat of the Assyrians by the payment of a thousand talents of silver; and seems to have acted with much severity in collecting the money from his subjects. This, coming on the back of other tyrannical proceedings, so disgusted the nation that more than one attempt was made to get rid of him. Nevertheless, he kept his seat ten years, and left it, at his death, to his son, Pekahiah. But Pekahiah's tenure of office was very short. Before the second year expired, Pekah, the general of his troops, rose up against him; and, putting him to death, seized the crown, which he wore, amid many troubles, for twenty years.

B.C. 757. — Meanwhile, in Judah, the death of Uziah transferred to Jotham the trappings of that kingly power, which, for the two preceding years, he had in reality wielded. No man could govern more wisely, or with greater moderation. He maintained in its integrity the worship of Jehovah. He rebuilt the temple, which had again fallen to decay; he strengthened the works by which Jerusalem was covered; he put down a rebellion of the Moabites and Ammonites; and made ready to encounter a storm which threatened from another quarter. For

Pekah king of Israel had entered into an alliance with Resim king of Syria ; and a united army was assembled, with a view to overrun Judah. It was at this critical moment that Jotham died, and that his son Ahaz succeeded to the throne ; and a sad reverse ensued.

B.C. 741. — It is recorded of Ahaz that “ he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel ; ” that “ he made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel ; ” that “ he sacrificed and burned incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.” The reign of such a man could not be other than unfortunate. Invaded by the armies of Israel and Syria, he suffered repeated defeats ; and saw his towns sacked and his fields laid waste, without being able to defend them. Not fewer than two hundred thousand persons were, on this occasion, carried as slaves to Damascus ; and as many more would have undergone the same fate in Samaria, had not one of God’s prophets remonstrated with the Israelites against so impious a proceeding. It was in this reign, and during this invasion, that Isaiah gave utterance to that sublime prediction which has, in all ages, been applied to the Messiah and his immaculate conception ; and from which we now gather that, not till the Messiah came should Judah cease, under one form of government or another, to retain its nationality.

B.C. 740. — Unable to keep the field, and hopeless of Divine interference in his favour, Ahaz sent to entreat the assistance of Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria. This monarch, who, on the death of Pul, had succeeded to the throne, had his own ambitious ends to serve, and readily put his armies in

motion. But he directed them, in the first instance, against Damascus, the capital of Syria, reduced the place after a long defence, and removed its inhabitants into Upper Medea. He then marched into Israel. Pekah could make no head against him. All the provinces to the east of the Jordan were over-run, and the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites which dwelt there carried to Halah and Habor, on the river Gozen. And now affairs began to put on such a doubtful aspect that Ahaz dreaded his nominal ally more than he had ever feared his open enemies. He loaded Tiglath-pileser with congratulations, stripped the temple of its gold and silver furniture in order to present them to him, and hastened to Damascus, in the hope that a personal interview might enable him to clear up the doubts which the mysterious proceedings of the victor had engendered. He did not miss his purpose. The dreaded invasion of the Assyrians was postponed for a season, and Ahaz passed the residue of his days in peace. His end was not, however, that of one who had laboured to do God's service. To the last he gave himself up to a course of impure idolatry, and, after wearing the crown sixteen years, he died of a loathsome disease.

CHAP. XXXV.

SECOND BOOKS OF KINGS AND OF
CHRONICLES — *continued.*

KINGS OF ISRAEL — PEKAH. HOSHEA. OVERTHROW
OF THE KINGDOM. AFFAIRS OF JUDAH. HEZE-
KIAH.

B.C. 728. — MEANWHILE the crisis of Israel's fate, hurried forward by the apostacy of its people as well as by its rulers, drew on. Pekah, the murderer of Pekahiah, after a troubled reign of twenty years, fell a victim to the indignation of his subjects; and another interregnum, or season of anarchy, ensued. It lasted about ten years, at the close of which Hoshea, the chief conspirator and assassin of Pekah, seized the crown. He became immediately engaged in hostilities with Shalmaneser, the son and successor of Tiglath-pileser on the throne of Assyria, and suffered a complete defeat. The Assyrians entered Samaria in triumph; reduced Israel to the condition of a tributary province; and so kept it, with no light yoke on the people's necks, for three years. But a sterner fate than this was in store for them. Egypt, alarmed at the growing influence of Assyria, took up arms to oppose it, and Hoshea, in an evil hour, engaged to co-operate with her ruler. He was again invaded ere his Egyptian allies could come to his succour; and, having no hope of pardon, shut himself up in Samaria. That city stood a siege of three whole

years, during the latter portion of which the sufferings of its inhabitants were terrible. At last it yielded ; and with it fell the kingdom of Israel, never to rise again. Almost all the people of Hebrew descent were removed from their homes. Scattered through the northern provinces of Assyria, or else planted by small sections in the cities of the Medes, they became absorbed by degrees into the general population of the empire ; while the land which they vacated was taken possession of by immigrants from neighbouring tribes, who assumed the name of Samaritans, and became the forefathers of that nation of which, as we descend the stream of history, it will be my business to speak more at length.

The kingdom of Israel, or of the Ten Tribes, subsisted as a distinct nation rather more than 256 years. It came to an end B.C. 719, at a period when the affairs of Judah happened to be conducted by one of the best and ablest of the monarchs that ever sat upon David's throne. Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, differed from his father in all the points of his character. Pious, truthful, and of a resolute spirit, he first purged the temple of the idolatrous vessels which Ahaz had introduced into it, and then went on to destroy every graven image, statue, and altar, to which, in any part of the kingdom, divine honours were paid. Even the brazen serpent, which, up to his day, had served as a memorial of the crimes and punishments of their ancestors under Moses, he broke to pieces, because the common people had learned to worship before it. He next restored to its ancient splendour the public worship of Jehovah ; and arranging the priests into courses, gave back to them and to the Levites the tithes and first-fruits of which his predecessors had deprived

them. Nor was he less brave towards the foreign enemies of his country than resolute in correcting its internal vices. He marched against the Philistines, drove them out of the Jewish districts which, amid the confusion of the times, they had contrived to occupy; and made himself master of almost all their territories except Gath and Gaza, and the provinces dependent on them. Moreover, he refused to continue the tribute which his father had paid to the king of Assyria, and determined rather to risk all in the field than remain the vassal of a heathen monarch. Happily for him, Shalmaneser was prevented from executing the threat which so bold an avowal called forth. Syria and Phœnicia, not less than Judah, were in revolt, and under the walls of Tyre, which he hastened to besiege, the Assyrian king received a wound, of which he died.

Shalmaneser was succeeded by Sennacherib on the throne of Assyria, and the Syrian and Phœnician rebellions were both put down. Against Judah the victorious armies were next turned; and the tidings of their approach spread the greater terror through the land that Hezekiah lay, at the moment, on a sick bed. Indeed, the malady under which he laboured, was of such a nature that recovery appeared to be impossible; and Isaiah, the prophet, told his master "to set his house in order, for he would surely die." Hezekiah, however, full of anxiety in regard to his country, ceased not to pray for a prolongation of his days, and received a gracious answer. The same prophet who had warned him to prepare for immediate death, now told him that fifteen more years were added to his span: and a plaister of figs being applied to the wound or sore from which he suffered, the sore soon healed up, and he returned vigorous as before to the business of life.

Against the advance of the Assyrians Hezekiah made what preparations he could. His force being inadequate to meet the enemy in the field, he hastened to throw garrisons into all the fortified towns, while he repaired the works which covered Jerusalem itself, and stored it for a siege. Nor did he omit to send ambassadors to Egypt, with an earnest request for succour ; a proceeding which served no other purpose than to indicate, on his part, a lingering distrust either in the power or the will of Jehovah to save. Indeed, it operated so far injuriously, that the delay of the Egyptians in taking the field broke the courage of his own troops, who looked to their co-operation as the only chance of resisting effectually. Hence when town after town fell, and the capital itself seemed to be threatened, Hezekiah's heart failed him ; and he made a tender of submission. A heavy fine was imposed and paid ; but it purchased only a brief and insecure peace ; for Sennacherib was no sooner free from a rebellion that had broken out in Ethiopia, and troubled his rear, than he resumed his operations against Judea in a more hostile spirit than before.

From the town of Lachish, before which he sat down, Sennacherib sent two of his chief officers to demand the surrender of Jerusalem. The officers employed to perform this service were not careful to soften its asperity ; but neither their blasphemies against Jehovah, nor the insolent tenor of their master's letter, had any effect in dividing the Jewish people from their king. Not one word was spoken by the crowd which looked down from the city wall upon the envoy, while Hezekiah carrying the letter into the temple, spread it there before the Lord. " Fear not," was God's answer, delivered by the mouth of his prophet ; " Sennacherib shall not throw up a fort

before this city, nor shoot an arrow there." Nor, though he twice advanced for this purpose, did Sennacherib strike a blow at Jerusalem. On the first occasion, while occupied in the siege of Libnah, rumours of a Cushite invasion caused him hastily to return to Assyria. On the second a fate more ruinous and awful overtook him. Having pitched his camp before the city, and repeated his defiance of Jehovah, as the God of Judah, he and his host lay down at night to sleep. Not fewer than eighty thousand of these stout-hearted men never woke again; and the rest, dismayed at the sight of so many corpses crowding every part, lost all order and fled. Sennacherib did not long survive this blow. A conspiracy had for some time been formed to dethrone him, to which two of his own sons were parties, and these coming upon him in the temple of Nisroch, at Nineveh, whither he had gone to worship, slew him. The murderers escaped into Armenia, and their younger brother, Esar-haddon, became king.

B. C. 709.—For some time prior to this event, the Assyrian empire had been torn by many and great divisions. These, which began in the reign of Pul, and were with difficulty kept under by Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser, and Sennacherib, broke out again with redoubled violence on the death of the last-named prince; and led to the setting up of various independent monarchies, of which Media and Babylonia were the chief. A warrior called Mero-dach-baladan won and wore for thirty years the crown of Babylon. He sought, as was natural, support in all quarters, and did not overlook Judah while strengthening himself against the common enemy. Unfortunately for his country, Hezekiah exhibited too much eagerness in fostering this move-

ment. He received the Babylonish messengers hospitably, promised them all for which they applied, and the more to impress them with a sense of his value as an ally, showed them both his treasures and his armoury. For this weak act Isaiah, by God's command, reproved the king, and told him that the exhibition would be remembered long after the purpose for which it was then made had been served.

B. C. 696. — Hezekiah, though he promised much, seems to have fulfilled little to the rulers of Babylon. He wisely held aloof from mixing in the civil war, and devoted his energies to the improvement of his country. Under him agriculture greatly flourished; and the leading of an aqueduct into Jerusalem added much to the salubrity of the place, and the comforts of its inhabitants. Hezekiah reigned in all twenty-nine years, and died both beloved and regretted by his people.

CHAP. XXXVI.

SECOND BOOKS OF KINGS AND OF CHRONICLES — *continued.*

MANASSEH. AMON. JOSIAH.

HEZEKIAH was succeeded on the throne of Judah by his son Manasseh. A mere boy, only twelve years of age, at the period of his father's demise, this prince seems to have fallen into the hands of bad advisers; and the commencement of his reign was in consequence marked by many and grievous errors. His personal vices, including idolatry of the most

impure kind, were offensive in the sight of God and man; and his political blunders proved not less mischievous. He threw himself eagerly into the strife between Babylon and Assyria, and he suffered for it. Esar-haddon, after a desperate war of twenty-nine years, reduced the Babylonians to subjection; and having devastated Phœnicia, Palestine, and Egypt, marched upon Jerusalem. Manasseh, with more courage than prudence, led out his troops to meet the enemy, and sustained a signal defeat. He himself, indeed, fell into the hands of the Assyrians, and being carried to Babylon, was there cast into prison. But Judah's hour was not yet come. Wherefore the solitude of his prison-house awakened new thoughts in the mind of Manasseh, and Esar-haddon, who appears to have been as prudent as he was brave, accepted the apologies which his captive made, and sent him back to Jerusalem: Manasseh was not ungrateful, either to God or the king. He entirely reformed his own habits, and put down idolatry in the nation. His reign lasted in all fifty-five years; and his death was sincerely regretted.

B. C. 641.—The immediate successor of Manasseh was Amon; a young man whose crimes and follies appear to have exceeded in their extravagance and cruelty those of the worst of his predecessors. He did not keep his place more than two years. For his domestic servants conspired against him and put him to death. And then came Josiah to the throne—of whom it is recorded, “while he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David his father, and that he never afterwards diverged from this way to the right hand or to the left.”

B. C. 639.—Josiah was only eight years of age when he came to the throne. He reigned in all one-

and thirty years ; and if anything could have arrested the judgments which its many apostacies had gathered round Judea, the unvarying piety of this good king's life and government would have done so. He began by putting down, with a strong hand, all public exhibitions of idolatry in the land. He caused all the statues and images which his predecessors had set up to be destroyed ; and in order to satisfy himself that his orders had been acted upon, he made a personal progress from one extremity of the kingdom to another. At this time he fulfilled, even to the letter, God's assurance spoken at Bethel while Jeroboam offered sacrifice ; for he dug up the bones of the idolatrous priests of that province, and burned them on Jeroboam's altar. He next turned his attention to the purifying and restoring of the temple, into the interior arrangements of which all manner of improprieties had crept. Hilkiash the priest received instructions to arrange all things in the order which Solomon had planned ; and to throw out whatever superfluous furniture other monarchs might have introduced. Hilkiash did not fail in his duty ; and while sweeping out the crevices of the pile, found in one of them a book or roll, which proved, on examination, to be an accurate copy of the law. He carried it to the king ; who desired him to read. But when the priest came to those passages which declare that God would surely take vengeance for the apostacies of his people, the king rent his clothes. All the crimes of his ancestors rose up before him. He felt, as the hideous spectacle moved across his mind, that for Judah there could be no hope ; and the prophets, whom he consulted, were unable to promise more, than that the inevitable evil should not come in his day.

B.C. 624. — Saddened, but not rendered desperate by the prospects which were thus opened for him, Josiah applied himself more and more earnestly to the religious and moral improvement of his people. He caused copies of the law to be made and distributed throughout all the towns and cities of Judah. He called upon the people, by public proclamation, to come up and assist at the great national festivals ; and, at the appointed time, he held such a passover at Jerusalem, as had not been witnessed in that city since the days of David or Solomon. He was rewarded by a peace which suffered no interruption throughout the whole course of his reign. For while neighbouring nations groaned under the pressure of hostile armies marching through them, the soil of Judah was not once violated for one and thirty years. At last, however, this happy state of things underwent a change, — of the causes which led to which, a few words will suffice to give my young readers a sufficiently clear idea.

I explained, in another place, how civil war broke out in Assyria, and how Esar-haddon, after a struggle of nine and twenty years, conquered Babylon, and re-annexed it to the empire. He was not so successful in his wars with the Medes ; for they not only maintained their independence throughout the whole of his reign, but defied the utmost efforts of his successor, called Nidus, to reduce them. The Medes fought under the leadership first of one Artæus, who established his capital or seat of government at Ecbatana ; and next of Phraortes, who mounted the throne about the year B. C. 663.

In B. C. 658, Ninus, king of Assyria, died, and was succeeded by his son Nebuchodonosor. He seems

to have spent about twelve years in consolidating his power at home ; and then he prepared to apply his whole strength to the conquest of Media. Accordingly, all the states which had ever paid tribute to his ancestors were called upon to furnish troops ; and Syria, Phœnicia, and Judah he included in the list. But Egypt was on bad terms with Assyria ; and the king of Egypt prevailed upon these three powers to withhold the troops which Assyria demanded. Nevertheless, Nebuchodonosor set out upon his expedition against Media, and prevailed. He defeated the Medes in the open country, laid siege to Ecbatana, and in the year B. C. 621, took it.

Having finished the war, Nebuchodonosor determined to punish Syria, Phœnicia, and Judea, for the contumacy of which they had been guilty. He overran the two first in person, and then, departing home, sent Holofernes, one of the most renowned of the officers in his service, to conquer Judea. Holofernes advanced at the head of a large and well-appointed army ; and not desiring to leave Bethulia, a small but well fortified town in his rear, laid siege to it. The place was sore beset, for the Assyrians cut off all the supplies, and there was much talk of surrender, when Judith, a woman of great courage and surpassing beauty, determined to hazard more than life for the welfare of her country. She stated her plan to the magistrates, and, having secured their sanction, she threw herself in the way of the Assyrian patrols, and was by one of them carried to Holofernes. She told him a tale of plots that had no existence, and, under a pretext of working out her treason, obtained the privilege of passing to and fro beyond the outposts at pleasure. At last, when Holofernes had

become entirely enslaved by her beauty, she consented to be present at a banquet; and, finding him by and by stupified with wine, she slew him in his bed. With the head of this redoubted warrior in a bag, she returned to the city, and was received with shouts of welcome by the people.

B. C. 640. — The death of its leader usually dissolves an eastern army, even in the present day. The murder of Holofernes, when discovered on the morrow, threw the Assyrians into complete disorganisation. A panic seized them, and they fled, each as if from certain destruction, and were closely pursued and harassed by the Jews, over a large extent of country.

We hear no more of Nebuchodonosor for about four years. It was a season to him of trouble and anxiety; for Babylonians and Medes, encouraged by the rout of Holofernes, rushed again into rebellion; and Egypt, recovering from an anarchy under which she had for some time laboured, did her best to feed the flame. At last, in B. C. 630, Nebuchodonosor died, and was succeeded by Sardanapalus, his son, one of the most luxurious and effeminate princes of whom ancient history makes mention. He made no head against the rebels. Defeated in the field, he shut himself up in Nineveh, which, after a long and obstinate defence, was taken. Sardanapalus burned himself and all his family in the palace, to which he set fire; and so ended, after a continuance of nineteen centuries, the great Assyrian empire.

Out of that colossal structure new states arose, — the kingdom of Babylon and the kingdom of Media. Nabopolassar governed the first, from his capital the city of Babylon; Cyaxares I. governed the second, after he had rebuilt and restored Ec-

batana. There was a strict alliance between them, which they cemented by the marriage of Nebuchadnezzar, the son of the former, to one of the daughters of the latter; but Babylon and Egypt were at war, and out of this struggle arose that calamity to Judah, to which, in a preceding paragraph, I have referred.

B. C. 608. — Josiah had no wish to mix himself up in the troubles which shook the Assyrian empire. His feeling was rather in favour of the house which had acted with so much tenderness towards his grandfather; and hence, when Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, sent to ask a safe passage for his army into Assyria, Josiah refused to grant it. The Egyptians, however, would take no denial, and Josiah, jealous of the rights of his crown, armed to oppose their progress. The armies met at Megiddo, and Josiah was slain. Deep and well-founded was the lamentation of the people over the fall of their beloved sovereign. Jeremiah the prophet, who flourished in his day, wept for him as for the last prop of Israel, and his funeral was conducted with more than royal pomp, all classes of men attending it as mourners.

CHAP. XXXVII.

SECOND BOOKS OF KINGS AND OF CHRONICLES — *continued.*

JEHOAHAZ (OR SHALLUM). JEHOIAKIM.

THE vacant throne was immediately seized by Jehoahaz, or Shallum (for he is known by both names), the son, but not the eldest son, of Josiah.

He did not keep his seat three months, for Pharaoh-Necho, following up his successes at Megiddo, marched upon Jerusalem; and, deposing the weak youth, sent him into Egypt, where he died. His elder brother, Eliakim, consented, upon this, to accept the crown from Pharaoh's hand, and to wear it as a tributary; his name was accordingly changed to Jehoiakim; and during an interval of about eleven years he oppressed his own people and outraged God's laws. But the hour of retribution was approaching; and the alliance with Egypt, to which Jehoiakim looked as his best safeguard, hurried it forward.

Pharaoh-Necho's success in Judea and against the Babylonians encouraged the Syrians and the people of many of the adjacent provinces to try the issue of another rebellion. They rose in arms and pressed Nabopolassar hard. But he, associating with himself in the government his son Nebuchadnezzar, made gigantic efforts to retrieve the fortunes of the empire. They were not made in vain. In a great battle fought on the banks of the Euphrates, Nebuchadnezzar entirely defeated the Egyptians, and, after reducing Syria and Palestine to obedience, he turned upon Judea. There, everything went down before him. Jerusalem was invested. It made but a feeble resistance, and then yielded. Jehoiakim was deposed, and, with many of the chiefs of tribes and families, loaded with chains and sent to Babylon. The temple, likewise, was robbed of much of its wealth, and the city oppressed with a heavy contribution. Indeed, so severe was the visitation, both in its immediate effects and in its remote consequences, that from it the prophets date the beginning of the Captivity. The first

capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar occurred in the year B. C. 605.

B. C. 602.—When Nebuchadnezzar deposed Jehoiakim he was but the coadjutor of Nabopolassar, on the Babylonish throne. His arrangements respecting Judea were as yet incomplete, when tidings of his father's death reached him; and hoping to bind the Jews to himself by the tie of gratitude, he released Jehoiakim from prison. He then exacted from him, in the name of Jehovah, an oath of fidelity and true friendship, and set him up again upon the throne of which he had never been worthy. But neither the bond of gratitude, nor the obligation of an oath, operated as any restraint upon one so depraved as Jehoiakim. Within three years he again put himself under the guidance of Egypt, and sealed thereby his own and his country's doom.

B. C. 602.—It was in these later ages of apostasy and tribulation, that the majority of the prophets whose writings have come down to us, flourished. Jeremiah, next after Isaiah the most distinguished among them, remonstrated against the folly as well as the wickedness of the king; and the more to impress him with a sense of his danger, caused Baruch the scribe to write a catalogue of all God's threatenings in a book. But the infatuated prince no sooner heard a few of these read aloud than he seized the volume, cut it across with a knife, and threw it into the fire. He endeavoured, likewise, to arrest Jeremiah, whom he would have certainly put to death, had not the prophet managed to conceal himself. Before he could execute his purpose, however, Nebuchadnezzar appeared at the gates. Jerusalem was again invested, again punished by heavy fine, again deprived

of most of its leading men, and again pardoned. Indeed, Jehoaikim himself received the king's permission to continue at the head of affairs; though not without giving hostages for his future conduct. The children of all the branches of the royal family, and of most of the noble houses which yet remained in the land, Nebuchadnezzar removed to Babylon, where they became pages and personal attendants on the court; among these occur the names of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, better known, at least in Babylonia, as Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

There are men so infatuated, that neither hope of good nor fear of evil is of sufficient potency to keep them in the right line; and Jehoiakim seems to have been of that number. Within a year of this second humiliation he was again a rebel, and Nebuchadnezzar's patience being exhausted, he sent orders to the governors of all the adjacent provinces to march upon Jerusalem and destroy it. They gathered together a motley host, and overran the open country. Jerusalem was closely invested, its supplies were cut off, and frequent sorties thinned the garrison from day to day. In one of these Jehoiakim was slain; and his son Jehoiachin, a child of eight years of age, mounted the tottering throne.

B. C. 597. — The siege went on but slowly, till Nebuchadnezzar becoming impatient, arrived in person to conduct the operations. All hope now departed from the Jews; they therefore opened their gates, and threw themselves on the king's mercy. Not even yet did it wholly fail. Jehoiachin was indeed deposed; and a son of the good Josiah, to whom the name of Zedekiah was given, received the crown. But he, like all his immediate predeces-

sors, abused the king's leniency. Moreover, he plotted a rebellion in common with the hereditary enemies of Israel, the Moabites, the Edomites, the Sidonians, and other polluted races; and treated with contempt the remonstrances of the good and wise Jeremiah on the occasion. It was to no purpose that this holy man assured him of the utter worthlessness of his plans. It was equally in vain that Ezekiel, then a captive in Babylon, denounced God's vengeance on both king and people. They were alike laughed to scorn; and the war began.

B. C. 597. — It was felt on both sides that the day of clemency was past. While Nebuchadnezzar, therefore, was advancing slowly towards Jerusalem, Zedekiah stored the place with all things necessary for a siege, and sent messengers to Egypt with large offers of tribute, in order to induce a diversion from that side in his favour. To do him justice, likewise, Zedekiah fought like a desperate man; and for a moment light broke in upon his darkening prospects, but it was only for a moment. The king of Egypt took the field, and the rumour of his approach induced the Babylonians to raise the siege. Their departure operated as a signal for the renewal of all the idolatrous and cruel practices which the Jews, amid the depth of their terror, had abandoned. But the joy of this infatuated people soon came to an end. Having forced the Egyptians back into their own land, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem; and the siege was renewed with fresh vigour. It would be a long tale to tell how the garrison fought, and how the inhabitants suffered, as long as a morsel of garbage remained wherewith to sustain life. Breaches were made in the walls, assaults delivered and repulsed; houses set on fire, whole streets razed, and at last, over

multitudes of the dying and the dead, the victorious army marched. All the horrors of a city taken by storm ensued, and Jerusalem ceased to be the capital of a state.

Zedekiah being taken alive, had his eyes put out, after the whole of his children were slain in his presence. He was then loaded with chains, and sent off to Babylon. The temple, being plundered of all its costly furniture, was burnt to the ground. The city walls were levelled, and the mass of the population, being swept to the farther side of the Euphrates, only a remnant of the poorest and most lowly remained to keep the soil in a state of imperfect cultivation.

This great catastrophe befell in the year B. C. 586; just 434 years subsequently to the building of the temple of Solomon, and 404 from the date of the revolt of the Ten Tribes, and the division of the Israelites into two nations.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

BOOKS OF EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER.

DANIEL, SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO.
REVOLUTIONS IN BABYLON. CYRUS THE GREAT.

HITHERTO in tracing the fortunes of God's chosen people I have had their own authentic and important records to consult. I am forced, from this moment, to seek elsewhere for some of the materials out of which my narrative is to be woven. For though the books of Esther and of the prophet Daniel

describe various incidents that occurred during the Babylonish captivity, and those of Ezra and Nehemiah tell how a remnant returned, how the temple was rebuilt, and the nationality restored; neither from these, nor from the apocryphal books, nor from all united, is it possible to gather more than a few scattered facts of undoubted value, as far as they go, but valuable only when accepted as fragments of a great whole. My readers must, therefore, put themselves trustingly into my hands, while I endeavour to clear for them a way through the six centuries, or thereabouts, that interpose between the first fall of Jerusalem and the coming of Jesus Christ.

B. C. 585. — Though swept of most of its leading families, Judea was not left a desert after the destruction of the capital. No sooner were the Chaldean armies withdrawn, than numbers of fugitives came forth from their hiding places; and these, submitting readily to the chief whom Nebuchadnezzar set over them, began again to plough and to sow, and to go about the ordinary business of life. This chief, however, by name Gedeliah, was not of the blood royal; and a person called Ishmael, who traced his lineage back to David, conspired against him, and slew him. But the only effect of this bad deed was to stir up a short civil war in the land. It ended in the flight of all concerned. Ishmael took refuge among the Ammonites, and Johanan, his rival, fled into Egypt, carrying with him the prophet Jeremiah, who died there.

Meanwhile the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried into Babylon, took root in the provinces whither he caused them to be transplanted, and not uncheered by the promises of Ezekiel and other prophets, took to various occupations, like

men who must work, but are not therefore induced to lay aside their nationality. Among others, Daniel and his three friends grew from childhood to youth, under able teachers. They were committed to the care of a man high in rank about the palace, and soon won his good opinion; for they were as rigid in matters of principle as they were docile in their studies; and God blessed them with a daily increase of health and wisdom.

B. C. 570.—Nebuchadnezzar was a great warrior. He conquered the whole of the countries in the south and west of Asia Minor. He overran Egypt and plundered it. He punished the Jews again for the murder of Gedeliah, and found himself lord of the greatest empire which had ever obeyed the rule of one man. His next care was to adorn his capital with all that art could supply, and to encourage learning and learned men. But success proved a snare to him. He became very proud and very cruel.

B. C. 569.—One night he dreamed a dream which troubled him, and in the morning when he awoke it was forgotten. He sent for all his magi, or wise men, and desired them to set his mind at ease. But as he could not repeat the dream, they assured him that it was beyond their power to give the interpretation of it. Upon this he commanded them all to be put to death. God, however, had mercy upon them, and the king's dream was revealed to Daniel, who repeated it to him, clause by clause, as it had passed through his mind. And Daniel did more. He explained that in this vision God gave him a foresight into the revolutions which should come to pass; that his empire should give place to another, and all finally become "the kingdom of God and of his Christ." Nebuchadnezzar

was struck with amazement, and from that day forth ceased not to treat Daniel with the greatest favour. The young Hebrew became governor of the province of Babylon, and head of the college of Magi.

The advancement of Daniel was followed by that of his three friends; and they all became, as under similar circumstances most men are apt to be, objects of envy and hatred to those whom they had passed in the race of life. Repeated attempts were therefore made to destroy them, but God and their own uprightness carried them through all. Once when required to worship before a golden image, they refused; and three of them were cast into a burning furnace, which refused to consume them. At a later period and under a different reign, Daniel prayed thrice a day, as he had been wont to do, in spite of an order craftily obtained, that no one, on pain of death, should, for thirty days, ask a petition of any God or man, save of the king. For this he was cast into a den of hungry lions, whose mouths God closed so that they injured him not. But these were events, which to the eye of the careless might seem to affect the fortunes of individuals only: there were others occurring more extended in their influence at the moment, of which I must now speak.

Time passed, and Nebuchadnezzar, carried out of himself by the tide of continual success, began to exact from his subjects divine honours. He was in the beginning of this wild career, when he saw, in his dream, a tree of which the top reached to heaven, and under the shadow of which all the beasts of the field seemed to lie. Suddenly, as he gazed at it with admiration, a voice was heard to say, "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the

beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches : Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field ; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth : Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him ; and let seven times pass over him." Terrified and perplexed, he sent for Daniel, who at once revealed God's doom. The man who aimed at being treated as a God, became a lunatic for seven years, and crawled like a beast upon his hands and knees.

B. C. 561. — Nebuchadnezzar recovered from his sore malady, as Daniel had promised. He came back to his people and to his palace also, a changed man. He lived humbly and piously a few years more, and died in peace. His successor, Evemerodoch, did not tread in his steps, and, after three years of trouble and difficulty, made way for Belshazzar. It was during the reign of this latter prince, that to Daniel visions were granted, which indicated the rise, in succession, of the empires of Persia, Greece, and Rome, and shadowed out the consequences which were to ensue to the world. But perhaps the most striking incident of the period befell on the night which brought to a close at the same instant the life and the reign of the king. The circumstances were these.

Belshazzar is described by historians as one of the greatest tyrants that ever oppressed mankind. His delight was to spread misery around him ; and he became, as might be expected, an object of hatred as well as of terror to all his subjects. Frequent conspiracies were formed to destroy him ; and the discovery of each of these served but to deepen the

tone of his atrocities. It came to pass on a certain night, when he was indulging in one of his brutal orgies (for he was as polluted as he was cruel), that he commanded the sacred vessels belonging to the Jewish temple to be introduced into the hall, and to be applied to the vilest uses. Suddenly there appeared against the wall the form of a man's hand, which wrote thereon words in characters of fire. There was dismay and anguish in that degraded company. All saw the hand, all gazed upon the burning scroll, but none could read or gather a meaning from it. Daniel was sent for; and while he was yet explaining that "God had taken the kingdom from the tyrant," the mission was fulfilled: a band of conspirators rushed in, and Belshazzar was hewn to pieces.

B. C. 553. — The successor of Belshazzar was Cyaxares, called in Holy Scripture Darius the Mede. Descended, through an early intermarriage, from the same stock as Belshazzar, he seems to have had some claim, by right of birth, to the Babylonian throne. At all events he won it, and thus reunited in his own person the kingdoms of Babylonia and Media. But being of an indolent disposition, he preferred the comparative quiet of Ecbatana to the pomp and magnificence of Babylon, and did not, therefore, after his coronation, reside much in the latter city. He was greatly attached to Daniel, and behaved kindly to the Jews for the prophet's sake. His reign was, however, very short: it terminated B. C. 551, and as he left no son to succeed him, or to hold his immense empire together, a series of divisions and civil wars ensued. At last, in 536, Cyrus, king of Persia, who, besides being the nephew of Darius, had married his daughter, overcame all opposition, and made himself master of

Babylon; and though he wielded the sceptre only five years, they were years of great moment in the history of the chosen people.

CHAP. XXXIX.

BOOKS OF EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER.

FIRST RETURN FROM BABYLON. ZERUBBABEL, EZRA, MORDECAI, ESTHER, AND NEHEMIAH.

B. C. 536. — SIXTY-NINE years had run their course since the commencement of the Jewish troubles under king Jehoiachin, when Cyrus, moved by compassion for the remnant of an ancient race, issued a proclamation permitting the Israelites to return to their own land, and to dwell therein. It was read with tearful eyes in many a dwelling; and about fifty thousand persons declared their willingness to act upon the suggestion. They chose for their leaders Zerubbabel, grandson of the late king Jehoiachin, and Joshua, the second in descent from him who had been high priest in Nebuchadnezzar's day; and laden with the precious furniture of the temple, as well as furnished with letters of commendation to the several governors of Palestine, they set out upon their journey. Their first business naturally was to provide themselves homes. Old landmarks were sought out, old houses restored, and as much of the soil as time would permit was reduced to a state of cultivation; and by and by, round the ruins of Jerusalem, some of the great national festivals were held. Then followed a collection of means and of money; after which the

foundation stone of a new temple was laid. It is recorded of those who laboured in this pious work, that while the young, whose eyes were on the future, rejoiced, the aged, who thought of glories passed away, wept bitterly. Both old and young, however, pursued their toil incessantly, and the pile made progress:

B. C. 534. — The reader has probably not forgotten that in order to prevent the land from going absolutely out of cultivation, Shalmanezar, after he had taken Samaria and scattered its inhabitants over many provinces, directed a mixed multitude of Ammonites, Syrians, Philistines, and the refuse of the ten tribes themselves, to enter upon the occupation of the territory which he had wrested from Israel. Though loosely connected at the outset, these people grew gradually into one, and, under the name of Samaritans, took a place, though a lowly one, among the vassals of the Chaldean emperor. As soon as they observed what the Jews were doing, they demanded to be admitted to a participation in their toils and their privileges. But Zerubbabel determinedly repelled their advances; and they became in consequence the implacable enemies of him and of his people. So long as Cyrus lived they were, indeed, forced to disguise their feelings, while they indulged them indirectly. But the death of that great man, which occurred B. C. 529, left them free to follow their own devices. For Cambyses, his son and successor, inherited no portion either of the talents or the virtues of his father. Hence the building of the temple was stopped by public edict. No more colonists came to strengthen the first settlers; and throughout a space of rather more than eight years, all progress towards the re-settlement of Judea was stayed.

B. C. 516. — The wars of Cambyzes and his shocking cruelties will be briefly glanced at in our history of Greece. So will the circumstances which attended his death, and the usurpation for a few months of the royal dignity by an impostor. It is sufficient for the purpose of this narrative to state, that in 521 B. C., Darius Hystaspes came to the Babylonish throne, and that he greatly favoured the Jews. Restraining their enemies on every side, he even went so far as to decree, that the tribute due to himself from Samaria and other provinces near, should be paid to Zerubbabel, and expended on the re-edification of the temple. So encouraged, the Jews worked with good will, and in due time, in spite of numerous though brief interruptions, the second sanctuary was finished.

B. C. 516. — This great event, followed as it was by a solemn dedication of the pile to God's service, and the keeping of the feast of the pass-over with exceeding pomp, became thenceforth a marked day in the Jewish calendar. It was well for the people that they were enabled to accomplish so much ere Darius died: for his successor, Xerxes, who came to the throne B. C. 485, though confirming in name all the privileges accorded to them by his father, was too much occupied in schemes of war to see that his orders were strictly executed. On the whole, however, the reign of Xerxes was not unfavourable to the Jews; while that of Artaxerxes Longimanus, his successor, of whom we read in the book of Esther as Ahasuerus, though it began amid threats of great calamity, proved eminently auspicious in its progress.

B. C. 460. — Ahasuerus received from his father Xerxes a legacy of wars, both with Egypt and with Greece. The latter, though in point of fact by far

the more formidable of the two, does not seem to have occasioned him so much thought as the former. And hence, when the Samaritans sent to inform him that the Jews were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, purposely to take part with the Egyptians against him, he gave to the report too ready credence, and forbad the continuance of the work. He was not, however, averse either to the re-peopling of Judea, or to the setting up again, in its ancient splendour, of the worship of the temple. Quite otherwise. Indeed, not only he, but all the Chaldean sovereigns, from Darius Hystaspes downwards, appear to have acquired from Zoroaster, himself a pupil of the prophet Daniel, very correct views of the unity and the nature of the Supreme Being. Wherefore he encouraged a further emigration of the remnant to their own country, and sent with them Ezra, a man of singular piety and learning, to be their leader by the way, and their ruler afterwards. Ezra was well received by the people, to whom he conducted so desirable a reinforcement; and he exerted himself, taking their hearty concurrence with him, to redress grievances and break through bad customs that had sprung up. Not to him, however, was awarded the honour and satisfaction of replacing Judea among the distinct nations of the earth. That privilege was reserved for another: and of the circumstances which led to it, and enabled Ezra to turn it to excellent account, it is necessary that I should speak.

Daniel and his friends were all dead. The influence which they had exercised over the kings of Chaldea, their successors did not retain; indeed, the Jewish nation seems to have been regarded in Ahasuerus's time with general aversion. For being cured of their disposition to heathenism, the Jews of the

captivity had become intolerant of the vices of their neighbours, and not only refused, as a people, to join in the rites of idolatry, but openly denounced them. We read no more, therefore, of men of Hebrew descent ruling over provinces, though the kings, unquestionably more enlightened than the majority of their subjects, still treated them with favour. Things were in this state, when Ahasuerus, having won a great victory over the Egyptians, gave a feast to his nobles, at Shushan, in order to commemorate the event. He sent for his queen, Vashti, that she might honour the festival with her presence; but she refused to come. It was not customary in the land of her birth for women of rank to be seen by strangers; and, in spite of the king's urgent entreaties, she abode in her own apartments. Indignant at her disobedience, Ahasuerus dissolved his connection with her, and gave orders that the fairest damsels in the kingdom should be sought out, in order that he might select another and more obedient partner.

B. C. 457. — It chanced that a fair Jewess, by name Hadassah, the orphan niece of Mordecai, one of the last survivors of the second captivity, won the king's favour. He changed her name to Esther (a word signifying a star), and took her to wife. But Mordecai, fearful lest her lineage might tell against the queen, at once forbade her connection with the despised Jews to be made known, and would not suffer her to advance his own fortunes. He accepted, indeed, a humble situation in the palace, which enabled him to have occasional interviews with his adopted daughter, but he steadily refused to pass beyond it; and he reaped his reward.

It chanced that Mordecai discovered a conspiracy against the king's life; and by disclosing, pre-

vented its execution. His place, however, was too lowly to give him access to the royal presence ; and the officer through whom he made his communication was no friend either to him or to his race. This man, whose name was Haman, derived his descent from Agag, king of the Amalekites. He had won the king's favour, and presumed on it ; and finding that Mordecai would neither stoop to court him, nor consent to do his master wrong, he resolved to execute a fearful vengeance on the whole Jewish nation. He persuaded the king that the Jews had universally conspired to create a revolution ; and he obtained an edict by which, on a certain day, the governor of every province in the empire was desired to put to death all the Israelites that dwelt within his district. So foul a deed, however, God's providence would not suffer to be done. The secret broke out. It came to the ears of Mordecai, and now he felt that it had become his duty to communicate privily with the queen. With exceeding skill, and in humble reliance on God's mercy, the uncle and niece set themselves to deliver the king's mind from its prejudices. The service which Mordecai had on a previous occasion rendered was made known to Ahasuerus. He investigated the whole case between that faithful man and Haman ; and arrived at the conclusion that the latter deserved no mercy. And the whole matter issued in the execution of the bloodthirsty Amalekite, and the elevation of Mordecai to a place of honour in the state. Nor were the Jews overlooked. According to the usages of the empire, a decree once issued could not be recalled. But there went forth a second, which permitted the Israelites to stand on their own defence. They did so ; and from that time forth, the day of the success-

ful resistance to Haman's atrocious designs was kept as a solemn festival in the church of the temple.

B. C. 444. — The victory which Ahasuerus had gained over the Egyptians was followed by a treaty of peace with Athens; one article of which stipulated that all Greek cities in Asia minor should be governed by their own laws. To guard against the infraction of this, it was arranged that no Persian army should advance within three days' march of the coast, nor any Persian ship of war navigate in the narrow channel between Greece and the Asiatic main. Now stipulations like these gave to Jerusalem and to Judea generally, a factitious importance in connection with the Persian empire. The former, besides being but three days' journey from the coast, lay in the direct route from Persia to Egypt, and was therefore well calculated to serve, in case of need, as a place of arms to the Persian monarch. Wherefore he, who up to this date had resisted the rebuilding of its walls, now gave his hearty assent to the suggestions of his wife Esther on the subject. Accordingly Zerubbabel the governor being dead, one Nehemiah, a person of good descent and exemplary piety, received instructions to set about the work. He quitted the palace, where he had acted as the king's cupbearer, and threw himself heartily into the business. Neither the ridicule nor the threatened violence of the Moabites and Samaritans stood in his way. The first he treated with contempt; against the last he took proper precautions; and in due time Jerusalem stood once more within a circle of walls, which, according to the tactics of the day, deserved to be accounted as more than respectable.

The place being thus secured against danger from abroad, Nehemiah, assisted by the excellent Ezra,

set himself to remedy the religious and social defects under which the land still laboured. He restored to their ancient force the laws against usury, as well as the jubilee; while he gave back to its original possessors lands which their poverty might have forced them to alienate. He caused all impure marriages to be dissolved, and the festivals of the church to be observed. But the most remarkable event in his government was the completion, at this time, of the canon of the Old Testament, and its public reading in the ears of the people. For many a long day Ezra had busied himself in collecting and comparing as many copies of the law and of the other sacred books as could be found; and by putting them together, and connecting them where they seemed to require connection, by short sentences and explanatory notes, he produced that volume which has ever since been accepted, both by Jews and Christians, as a genuine memorial of God's dealings with the people of old.

B. C. 433.—It is impossible to overrate the advantages, in a moral point of view, of these reforms. The Jews became in spirit as well as in letter a religious people; and probably there would have been no falling away had Nehemiah's commission continued to him the chief authority for life. But it expired at the end of three years; and when Nehemiah went back to Babylon, Eliashib the high priest, on whom the government devolved, lacked either the will or the power to govern strictly. Abuses again crept in; not such as used to prevail when kings became idolatrous and led their subjects after them,—for idolatry seems to have been by this time entirely renounced,—but alliances were winked at which the law had forbidden, and with them came the vices of sensuality and indif-

ference to form. But Esther heard of this, and through her interest Nehemiah received a fresh commission and went back. He showed mercy to no transgressor. They who had married wives from among the forbidden nations were compelled either to separate from them or to depart; and so rigid was the governor, that the son of the high priest himself was not spared. This man, whose name was Manasseh, had taken to wife the daughter of Sanballat, a Cushite governor of Samaria, and rather than submit to be separated from her, abandoned his country. And a temple being built for him on Mount Gerizim after the pattern of that in Jerusalem, he there continued to worship and offer sacrifices to Jehovah all his days. Among other institutions which Judea owed to Nehemiah was that of the synagogue. Heretofore if good men, unable to travel as far as Jerusalem, desired to read the law together and to worship, they did so either in their own private houses, or in the open air. Nehemiah encouraged the building of synagogues, or houses of prayer, in all the outlying towns and villages, and they became in time very numerous. They were so constructed that the windows of each looked towards Jerusalem; probably in commemoration of the custom of which the Psalmist speaks, when he describes himself always as "worshipping towards God's holy temple."

There lived under Nehemiah, and wrote, the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. They as well as Ezra were eminent for their piety and holiness, and with their writings and those of Nehemiah himself the canon of the Old Testament closes.

CHAP. XL.

APOCRYPHAL BOOKS, AND GENERAL
HISTORY.GOVERNMENT BY THE HIGH PRIESTS. KINGS OF
THE ASMONEAN LINE.

B. C. 422.—ON the death of Nehemiah, the government of Judea devolved upon the high priest, and it continued to be conducted by that functionary for many years. The consequence was, that an office established in the time of Moses for the maintenance of true religion only, acquired a political character, and ambitious men soon began to seek it by the same arts which they would have used to win a throne. Many a grievous calamity resulted from this arrangement, bringing discredit on the faith, and confusion into the polity of Judea. But as these were all intimately connected with the revolutions which went on in other states, it will be necessary to take a rapid glance at the progress of events, which brought about the accomplishment of all Daniel's most remarkable prophecies, and prepared the way for the coming of Christ into the world.

For about a hundred years from the date of Nehemiah's second administration, the empire of which Palestine formed a part underwent many revolutions. The death of Ahasuerus in B. C. 423, was followed by quarrels in the royal family, out of which arose the murder of the king's two legitimate sons, and the seizure of the crown by a third who was illegitimate. From this prince, whose

name was Ochus, Egypt revolted, and during the nineteen years that he filled the throne, the affairs of Greece were a constant source of trouble and anxiety to him. For he, adhering to the ambitious schemes of his predecessors, supported the Lacedæmonians in their war with Athens, and looked forward to the time when, weakened by their intestine struggles, not these two states alone, but the whole of Greece, would pass under the dominion of Persia. He miscalculated in this the characters and resources both of Greece and of Persia. A result the very opposite of that to which he looked, arose in course of time out of his policy, and Greece, instead of receiving the law from Persia, gave it.

Artaxerxes, the son of Ochus, mounted the throne in B. C. 404. He placed his brother Cyrus at the head of the province of Lydia, and soon had reason to repent it. For Cyrus was an ambitious and unstable man; so he raised an army of ten or twelve thousand Greeks, chiefly among the cities or settlements of Asia Minor, marched into the heart of the Persian empire, and strove to win the crown from his brother. Cyrus was killed, and the object of his expedition failed. But the perfect ease with which these ten thousand Greeks traversed a large portion of Asia, and defeated every attempt of the Persians to destroy them, taught a lesson to both parties which neither could readily forget. For a while, indeed, nothing seemed to come of it. Artaxerxes bribed the Greek governments largely, and kept them in constant strife one against another. But if he averted danger to his dominions from one side, he failed to restore order on another. Egypt, which he found in revolt at his accession, continued unsubdued during the whole of his reign, and he died at a very advanced

age, leaving the throne to be fought for by his children.

A prince called Doreb waded to it through a sea of blood; but his reign and that of Arses, who came after him, as well as the early part of the government of Darius Codomanus, belong much more to profane than to sacred history. They bore upon the fortunes of Judea only thus far, that Doreb, by his cruelties, forced both the Jews and the Phœnicians to join the Egyptians; and both Phœnicia and Judea suffered terribly in the contest. Jerusalem was indeed spared; but Jericho Doreb levelled with the ground, carrying the larger portion of its inhabitants into slavery. Moreover Judea was reduced from the rank of a separate province, and annexed to that of Cœlo-Syria, the governor of which soon began to mix himself up, more than was becoming, in the disposal of the high priesthood. The consequence was that the office became day by day a more marked object of ordinary ambition. Men fought for it as men fight for temporal thrones, and shed each other's blood even in the sanctuary.

It will be told elsewhere how Philip king of Macedon, after subjugating Greece, made preparations to invade Asia. The same book of history (the History of Greece) will show that Alexander, the son of Philip, took up his father's plans, and waged a long and successful war with Darius Codomanus. Now Darius was very kind to the Jews. He abolished a tax upon the sacrifices in the temple, which one of his predecessors had sanctioned, and would not permit the governor of Cœlo-Syria to oppress or wrong them. Under these circumstances, the Jews refused to join Alexander, or to send him any help when engaged in the long and difficult

siege of Tyre. Alexander, therefore, no sooner won the place, than he took the road to Jerusalem, with the avowed purpose of inflicting upon it a summary punishment. But the high priest, by name Jaddus, a pious man and a mild governor, arrayed himself in his pontifical habit, and going out at the head of a body of priests similarly equipped, met Alexander ere he arrived within some miles of the city. The conqueror of the world seems to have been smitten by a strong religious impulse. He descended from his chariot, received the priests with much respect, and not only spared the city, but presented gifts to the temple, and besought the prayers of the worshippers. This striking event occurred in B.C. 322. And the prophecies of Daniel being shown to the king, wherein his career is shadowed forth, and himself described as a ram (the emblem, by the by, of the Macedonian monarchy, as the lion is of that of England, and the black eagle of Prussia), he granted to the Jews many privileges, and passed on into Egypt.

B. C. 324.—As long as Alexander lived the Jews dwelt at peace. They even obtained under him an accession of influence; for their rivals, the Samaritans, slew the governor whom Alexander had placed over them; and he planted in Samaria a Macedonian colony, while he annexed a large portion of its territories to Judea. But in the troubles which followed the demise of the great conqueror, they soon became involved. His immense empire having been divided, Judea went, with Cœlo-Syria and Phœnicia, to an officer called Laomedon; while Egypt fell to the share of Ptolemy Lagus. As was not, perhaps, unnatural, these two chiefs quarrelled, and Jerusalem, being besieged by

Ptolemy, B. C. 322, was, after a stout resistance, taken.

B. C. 312. — Ten or twelve years of trouble followed this event. The Jews were not, indeed, dispersed as they had been in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, neither was the worship of the temple stayed, or the succession of high priests interrupted; but one hundred thousand of the chief citizens were transplanted to people Alexandria, and their land became the arena on which rival princes fought for dominion. At last Ptolemy prevailed, and Judea passed, for a while, under the control of the Egyptian empire. Moreover, the son of this Ptolemy, himself called Ptolemy Philadelphus, caused the great work of which I have spoken elsewhere to be accomplished. Under him, the Scriptures of the Old Testament were translated by seventy-two eminent scribes into Greek, and the manuscript being laid up in the library at Alexandria, became an object of study and of wonder to many Gentiles. This version of the Bible, of which I have elsewhere spoken as the Septuagint, was begun in B. C. 285, and completed in the year B. C. 278.

From this date down to the year B. C. 200, the connection between Judea and Egypt continued. The former, governing itself by its own high priests and magistrates, and observing the customs, civil and religious, which had come down from the times of Moses, paid tribute to the latter in peace, and in case of war supplied troops when called upon to do so. But except during the reign of Philopater, the intercourse between the two states does not seem to have been very close, and the cruelties of Philopater effectually disgusted the Jews with their position. There was therefore no regret on their part

when Antiochus the Great wrested Palestine from the hands of Philopater's successor; and his behaviour to them, and to their countrymen, dwellers in various parts of his dominions, gave them every reason to speak of him with gratitude. For he not only forbade strangers to interfere with their worship in Jerusalem, but planted Jewish colonies in very favourable situations, through Lydia, Phrygia, and other maritime districts. Unfortunately for himself, however, and as it appeared at the outset for the Jews also, Antiochus was led to undertake a war against the Romans, of which the results were to burden him and his successors with a heavy tribute. Antiochus himself did not long survive his reverses. The reign of his son Seleucus proved to be stormy and short,—while that of Heliodorus, who murdered Seleucus, extended over little more than a year. There came to the throne at last the brother of Seleucus, Antiochus Epiphanes, whom the pressure of this tax seems to have driven into madness. Never since Judah became a nation, had she suffered so much or such terrible wrongs as that tyrant inflicted upon her. He began with an avowed contempt for Jehovah, and an open traffic in holy things and holy offices, and he ended in prohibiting sacrifices to be offered, in Judea at all, except to the gods of Greece. He polluted the altar, by burning upon it the carcase of a sow. It is impossible to describe in adequate terms the ferocity of this monster and his officers: the women and children were dragged before the images of heathen gods, which he caused to be set up in every town and village; and they who refused to burn incense were put to death. Among other tales of horror, one is told of a widow, who, with her seven sons, was subjected to this ordeal.

One after another, the young men refused to apostatise, their mother animating and cheering them by her addresses all the while ; and when one after another they had died in her presence, she was at last slain, with a prayer to Jehovah on her lips.

B.C. 175.—Entirely cured of their disposition to idolatry, the Jews bore with firmness this cruel persecution ; till in the person of Matthias, a priest of the family of Asmon in the line of Phineas, the grandson of Aaron they found one who taught them how to resist it. They ran to arms, and under him and his gallant son Judas surnamed Maccabæus, they maintained, throughout six and twenty years, a religious war. Five kings of Syria endeavoured in succession to put them down. They were often reduced to the last extremity, escaping in broken bands to the hills, and thence sallying out again on their oppressors ; but their determination to die rather than abjure the worship of their fathers carried them to a triumphant issue. After destroying in various battles about 200,000 of the best troops of Syria, the Maccabees established the independence of their country, which they continued to govern,—from father to son,—little short of one hundred and twenty-six years.

B.C. 143.—The first of the illustrious family who took the title of King was called Simon ; the chiefs who preceded him desired no higher title than that of High Priest. But he obtained by acclamation of the people, in 143, the regal title. “The Jews,” so ran the decree, “were well pleased that Simon should be their governor and priest for ever ; or until there should arise *a faithful prophet* :” in other words, till the expected Messiah should come. And in Rome his ambassadors were received as

those of a free prince, desirous of being numbered among the allies of the republic.

Simon's reign extended over thirteen years, and proved upon the whole to be a prosperous one. He wrested from the Syrians the citadel of Acra, by means of which they still kept Jerusalem in check. He took the field, though rather as an ally than a tributary to the Syrian crown, against the Parthians. When a dispute between Demetrius the king of Syria, and his brother Antiochus, arose, Simon, as the price of the recognition of Judah's independence, took part with the latter; and by and by when Antiochus, victorious over his brother endeavoured to violate the treaty into which he had entered with Judah, Simon resisted and defeated him. But private treason did what open violence could not effect. Simon had given one of his daughters in marriage to Ptolemy, whom he appointed to be governor of Jericho. This man, ambitious of wearing the crown, invited Simon and his sons to a banquet; and letting loose upon them a band of assassins while they sat at meat, slew them there. It happened that one of Simon's sons, John, surnamed Hyrcanus, did not arrive from his post at Gaza in time to share the fate of the rest. And a servant having escaped from the slaughter, rode post to meet him and warn him of his danger. John retired immediately to Jerusalem, of which he closed the gates. A civil war ensued, which was fed by Antiochus king of Syria; but Hyrcanus kept his place. He defeated Ptolemy in the field, maintained Jerusalem against the Syrians many days, and showed so bold a front that the Syrians were glad at last to come to terms. Hyrcanus paid a fine of 500 talents, and consented to have the walls of Jerusalem broken down;—where-

upon Antiochus withdrew his troops, and the land had rest.

B.C. 106. — Hyrcanus filled the royal chair nineteen years. The latter portion of his reign was much more prosperous than its commencement ; for on the death of Antiochus he rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and delivered Judea from all the Syrian garrisons which kept it in check. He made war, likewise, upon many of his neighbours, and considerably enlarged the limits of his country. The Edomites, or Idumæans, in particular, he so entirely conquered, that he forced them to accept both the religion and the laws of the Jews ; and he destroyed the temple of the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim, though he could not prevail upon that people to worship at Jerusalem, or otherwise lay aside their peculiarities of doctrine and of worship. For it is worthy of remark that the Samaritans, while they embraced the great article of the unity of the Godhead, refused to recognise as of Divine authority any other than the five first books in the Old Testament.

Hyrcanus maintained friendly relations with Rome all his days, and died at last to the great regret of his own people.

CHAP. XLI.

JEWISH SECTS. THE SANHEDRIM. END OF THE
ASMONÆAN LINE. REIGN OF HEROD THE GREAT.

ONE of the main difficulties with which Hyrcanus had to contend, in his efforts to give consistency to the government, had its root in the hostility of the Pharisees, a party with whom his father Simon had

quarrelled, and with whom he himself never succeeded in being reconciled.

It will be necessary, before I go on with my narrative, to give a short account of this and the rival religious sects which sprang up in the Jewish Church; as well as to explain the constitution and powers of the Sanhedrim, an institution which played no inconsiderable part in the management of the civil affairs of the Jewish people.

There seem to have been no sects, properly so called, in the Jewish Church, till after the return from Babylon and the completion of the canon of the Old Testament by Ezra. Content to walk by the law as it was read and explained to them, the religious portion of the community did not inquire further; while the irreligious neglected the law itself, and in doing so ceased to be members of the church of the temple. But when Ezra set himself to revise the Scriptures, after a long interval of disuse and neglect, he found it necessary to take to his council one hundred and twenty elders, distinguished above the rest for their general intelligence and knowledge of the laws and customs of their fathers. To these he applied for information, not on points of doctrine, but on matters of ceremony and form; and they repeated to him faithfully the traditions which had been delivered to them by their ancestors. Ezra made use of them, and of their information, in the re-establishment of practices which had fallen into disuse, and caused the more valuable of the traditions to be committed to writing.

Out of this beginning arose the sect of the Pharisees. Its members held that there had been from the beginning both a written and an unwritten covenant in Israel, and that wherever the unwritten

seemed to contradict the written law the former was to be preferred. They took the name of Pharisee (a word which signifies separatist), because they claimed to be more holy than the rest of the community; and by affecting excessive zeal and austerity of life, they soon acquired great ascendancy over the masses. In points of abstract faith the Pharisees came, perhaps, nearer to the truths which we now receive than any other party in the Jewish Church; but they were hypocritical as well as vicious in their private lives, and as subjects turbulent and restless.

The rivals of the Pharisees in the Jewish Church were the Sadducees, a sect which originated with one Sadoc, a good and humble-minded man, and a scholar of Antigonus Sacho, one of Ezra's fellow-labourers. Sadoc's opinions seem to have been these, — that God is infinite in goodness, power, and mercy, and ought therefore to be worshipped because he is worthy of worship, without any consideration on the part of the worshipper of reward either here or hereafter. The disciples of Sadoc, perverting this sublime doctrine, drew from it the inferences that there could be no future state, either of reward or punishment, beyond the grave; that the soul of man perished with the body; and that the only pure spirit in the universe was the Great Cause of all things. It cannot with any reason be said that the notions of the Pharisees on these heads were sound or clear; for besides that, they restricted the resurrection to the descendants of Abraham, they were believers in the doctrine of a transmigration of souls, and attributed all manner of diseases and misfortunes to the agency of evil spirits. But wild as many of their views were, they certainly came nearer to the truth than their rivals. The

Sadducees appear to have been in private life at least as pure as the Pharisees. As judges they were far more rigid, as well as more just; for they held that in the present life virtue and vice always bring their proper rewards, and that any attempt on the part of man to screen vice or oppress virtue is execrable.

The Sadducees were never a numerous body. Their opinions prevailed chiefly among the higher classes; but they were as ambitious as their rivals to give the law to the community; and Simon, when persecuted by the Pharisees, sought their support and obtained it.

The Sanhedrim was a council consisting of seventy members, a president, or prince, a deputy, and a sub-deputy. It advised with the king or chief magistrate on affairs of state. It acted as a court of appeal from inferior tribunals; indeed in all cases where life and death were at issue, it alone had power to adjudge a capital punishment. The Jews say that it had existed ever since the selection by Moses of seventy elders to assist him in judging the people in the wilderness. But as we hear nothing of it in the times either of the Judges or of the Kings, it seems more probable that, as a national institution, it came into active operation only after the return from the Babylonish captivity.

The Sanhedrim met in a hall, of which one half stood within the precincts of the temple, one half lay without. In the latter portion the judges sat, all parties attending being required to stand in the former. The qualifications necessary to become a member of the Sanhedrim were, untainted birth, a knowledge of the law, and the traditions; some acquaintance with languages, arithmetic, astrology, divination, magic, fortune-telling, physic.

I shall have occasion to speak of other bodies and parties by and by ; but having explained the nature and the views of these three, it may be better, for the present, if I resume the thread of our history.

B.C. 106. — Hyrcanus left behind him several sons, of whom the eldest, by name Aristobulus, wore the crown one year. He committed some grievous crimes in the course of his short life, and died a prey to remorse. Alexander, his second son, then mounted the throne, and held it twenty-seven years, amid constant wars, either foreign or domestic. Fifty thousand Pharisees are computed to have fallen in the attempt to displace him, for the Pharisees were his great enemies ; but he succeeded in putting down all opposition, and largely extended the bounds of the principality. At his death, which occurred (B.C. 79), his widow, Alexandria, secured the government for herself, and making friends with the Pharisees, easily prevailed upon them to support her. But the queen died also in B.C. 70, and civil war between her sons, Hyrcanus II. and Aristobulus, at once broke out. On the side of Aristobulus the Sadducees ranged themselves ; the Pharisees to a man espoused the cause of Hyrcanus. Mainly because of the weakness of Hyrcanus's personal character, the party of Aristobulus prevailed, and in B.C. 69 he was accepted as second of that name on the throne of Judah. But a power more formidable than any with which the Jews had yet dealt, was already in the field. The Romans, pushing their conquests over Asia Minor into Egypt, arrived under Pompey, one of their great leaders, at Damascus ; and refused to be conciliated by the gifts which Aristobulus offered to them. They moved slowly, however, and thus gave time

for a renewal of the war between the brothers; the progress of which brought prominently forward a family, destined ere long to play a conspicuous part in Jewish politics.

Of the successes in war of Alexander, the father of the two princes who now fought for the crown of Jerusalem, including his conquest of Idumea, and his forcible conversion of its inhabitants to Judaism, notice has been taken in a former chapter. He found on invading the latter country a noble family, which either in reality or in pretence favoured his views, and he appointed the head of it, by name Antipas, to act as his governor of the conquered province. The son of this Antipas, likewise called Antipas or Antipater, espoused the cause of Hyrcanus II. in the civil war; and both he and his son Herod did good service on various occasions. Among other attempts to serve these princes, they prevailed upon an Arab chief, called Aretas, to come to the assistance of Hyrcanus with 50,000 men; and at the head of this force, supported by the party of the Pharisees, they besieged Aristobulus in Jerusalem. But the movement, however kindly meant, proved unfortunate in its issue. Jealous of the interference of a foreign power, the Romans marched against the Arabs, and Hyrcanus being attacked while retreating to avoid a battle, was defeated and forced to flee.

Pompey seems to have entertained no thought of recognising the claim of Aristobulus II. He intended to reduce Judæa to the state of a conquered province, and it was to no purpose that by supplications and presents Aristobulus sought to divert him from that intention. Neither was an attempt, which Aristobulus made in his extremity, to hold Jerusalem by force of arms, more fortunate.

Hyrcanus had a strong party within the walls, and rather than submit to one whom they regarded as a usurper, they secretly opened one of the gates, and admitted Pompey into the city. The temple still remained, however, and thither Aristobulus retreated; but though strong in itself, and stoutly defended, it could not hold out long, and being taken by assault, it was plundered and set on fire. Upwards of 12,000 Jews fell in the assault, many of them within the sanctuary itself.

B. C. 64. — During the ascendancy of the party of which Pompey was at the head, Judea ceased even in name to take a place among the kingdoms. It was under the rigid administration of Roman quæstors. But by holding out to Antipater the hope of better things, Cæsar easily enlisted the Idumeans in his service, from whom, as well as from the Jews, he derived considerable aid in his Asiatic war; and the consequence was that, suffering Hyrcanus to secure the office of high priest, he nominated Antipater to be procurator of Judea, and placed the two sons of that chief in the governments, one of Jerusalem, the other of Galilee. Herod, to whom the latter province fell, rendered himself conspicuous by the gallantry and skill with which he rooted out and chased away the bands of robbers which infested it. Antipater and Phasaël, being nearer to the seat of government, became objects of unmitigated jealousy to the high priest and his friends. They could not, however, be got rid of; and even Cæsar's murder, though it threw the whole civilised world into a ferment, did not suffice to loosen the chain which this able but unprincipled family of Idumeans had wound round the liberties of the Jewish people. An attempt was indeed made to break the spell; and Antipater himself died by poison. But Herod kept the field; and

Hyrcanus did not hesitate to purchase his forbearance by giving to him in marriage his daughter Mariamne. Herod desired no more. By skilfully playing into the hands of the various parties which struggled for ascendancy at Rome, he got himself appointed Tetrarch of Palestine, under Hyrcanus. The step from this place to the throne itself was not wide in itself; and circumstances narrowed it. Hyrcanus lost favour with the Pharisees in proportion as he appeared to depend upon Herod. Another civil war broke out unfavourably for Hyrcanus and his party, and Herod, applying to Rome for assistance, was himself advanced to the Jewish throne. He was consecrated in the temple of Jupiter at Rome, B. C. 84.

B. C. 34. — Herod's reign lasted in all thirty-five years. It began amid violence and strife, was prolonged through a series of horrible crimes, and ended with the life of the tyrant, under the shadow of deep remorse. Jealous of all who approached him, he put to death his own wife, his own sons, and his own sister. He alternately courted and oppressed his people, embellishing Jerusalem at an enormous cost, and filling both it and the other towns of his realm with theatres and statues in honour of Augustus his patron. Herod had no hold either upon the personal regard or the traditionary reverence of the Jews. Anxious to assimilate their practices to those of the Romans, he encouraged the growth among them of a third sect which took the name of Herodians, and which, without denying the divine authority of the Law and the Prophets, professed to regard as innocent customs arising out of heathenism. Herod's great work was, however, the rebuilding of the temple, in which he made use of the most costly materials. He began the work in the year

17 before Christ; and in eight years the sanctuary was finished, many of the courts and outer chambers being moreover in a fit state to be used. But it was still in progress when the Jews spoke of it as having been forty years under the hands of the architect, and was not completed till A.D. 62.

Such was the condition of Judah when those great events befell of which we read a detailed and accurate account in the New Testament. To this I now turn.

CHAP. XLII.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE fulness of time was come. Four thousand years of moral training had fitted the world for the reception of Him who was not only to reveal to it the nature and the will of the great Creator, but by the sacrifice of his own life upon the cross to make an atonement for the sins of many generations. That part in God's economy which the children of Israel had been chosen to play, was complete. After keeping alive in a corner of Asia Minor a spark of Divine truth amid ages of religious darkness elsewhere, they had contributed in latter years, by their dispersion through many lands, to diffuse its light over a far wider circle. Their Scriptures, translated into Greek, were accessible to every scholar of every nation. The teaching of Daniel and his friends had established a school of pure Theism in Assyria. At Alexandria, in a temple

built after the model of that of Jerusalem, their daily worship went on, and colonies of them planted in almost every city of Greece, and even at Rome, chaunted the Psalms of David, and read the Law and the Prophets continually in their synagogues. Meanwhile the Gentile world had received its discipline also. Tribes had grown into nations, nations into empires, — war and commerce had brought the ends of the earth together, and civilisation followed, as it still continues to do, in the train of each. Finally, the prophecies had so far received their accomplishment, that Assyria was gone down before the might of Persia, Persia before Greece, and Greece before Rome. The whole known world, that is to say, all the most civilised portions of it, obeyed the decrees of the Roman emperor, and there was profound peace everywhere.

But it was not in its physical condition alone that the world was become capable of profiting by the gospel of Christ when it should be delivered. The public mind, enlightened and elevated on many subjects, recognised its own inability to find out God. Heathenism, considered as a religious system, had lost its hold upon the respect of all except the uneducated. Its ceremonies were indeed upheld by the arm of the law, and the magistrate enforced obedience to its precepts because they were supposed to be useful for State purposes; but the very priests who taught its doctrines held them in derision, and the philosophers noticed them only to condemn. Acute and able reasoners on many subjects, and perpetually striving to satisfy themselves on all, the wisest and best writers of antiquity stopped short, in regard to Divine things at this conclusion, that God and his ways, their own nature, and the destiny

which awaited them after death, were past their finding out; and that never till the Supreme Being should send a special messenger to enlighten them on these points, could men hope to attain to any satisfactory solution of their doubts and their anxieties.

In collecting the materials for that part of my narrative which embraces the interval between the death of Nehemiah and the reign of Herod the Great, I have been driven to consult not only the Apocryphal Books of the Old Testament, but the writings of Jewish and other profane historians. The authorities to which I now invite my young readers to turn with me, are of far greater weight, and it may be well to preface what remains to be told by giving a brief and general account of them.

The New Testament consists of twenty-seven separate treatises, of which five are historical, twenty-one epistolary, and one strictly prophetic. The historical books, which give an account of the birth, life, conversation, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, are four in number. They are called separately gospels; though the substance of the whole, when combined and collated, makes up, in strict propriety of speech, the one Gospel. The fifth, called the Acts of the Apostles, describes the labours and journeys of these holy men, and especially those of St. Peter and St. Paul. The epistolary books or treatises comprise fourteen letters, written by St. Paul at various times, and addressed to particular portions of the Church; with seven catholic, or general letters, of which St. James, St. Peter, St. Jude, and St. John were the writers. The book of Revelation, universally ascribed to St. John, constitutes the only prophetic book, properly so called. And as it relates

almost entirely to events which are still in the future, it is usually regarded by sober-minded men with more of reverence than of prying and unprofitable curiosity.

The oldest of all the gospels is admitted to be that of St. Matthew. It was published about eight years after the resurrection of Christ ; and has ever since been read in the Church as a divinely inspired narrative. Matthew, otherwise called Levi, the son of Alpheus, was himself a native of Galilee and a publican, or tax-gatherer, by profession, under the Roman government. He collected the customs on all goods exported or imported at Capernaum, and received the tribute which passengers paid who visited that place, or passed from it by water. He was a constant attendant on our Lord, from the day when Jesus called him till after the ascension of his master into heaven.

Of the personal history of St. Mark, the author of the second book of the Gospel, we cannot speak with so much accuracy. That he was a friend and companion of St. Peter, and submitted his manuscript to the revision of that apostle, all antiquity is agreed. But whether he was one of the seventy, and therefore, a personal attendant on the Lord, is a fact not settled. His gospel appears to have been written about the year of our Lord 60 ; that is to say, after the dispersion of the apostles over the world. He composed it at Rome, while St. Peter was preaching there.

St. Luke, the author of the gospel which stands third in our version, was a native of Antioch, and a physician. Though a Gentile by birth, he appears to have received his early education in Jerusalem, and to have embraced the religion of the Temple ; in which state St. Paul found him. Converted to

Christianity by that apostle, he became his inseparable companion in all his travels ; and received from him both information and assistance in the compilation of this treatise. St. Luke, it is worthy of remark, was likewise the author of a fifth historical book—the Acts of the Apostles. His gospel was written in Greece, and published about the year of our Lord 63 ; his book of the Acts of the Apostles, written in portions, seems to have been collected into one volume a few years later.

On the lineage and early history of St. John, no obscurity rests. The son of Zebedee, and a fisherman, like his father, he was early called, with his brother James, to be a personal attendant on the Lord ; and his unwavering faith, gentleness, and docility of temper won for him the glorious appellation of the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” John survived all his fellow-labourers in Christ’s vineyard. And the composition of his gospel, which is avowedly an appendix to the rest, gave employment to the latter years of his life. It is supposed to have been published at Ephesus, about the year of our Lord 97.

The book of the Acts of the Apostles, as I have already stated, was written by St. Luke. It connects the gospels and the epistles together, and throws great light upon many expressions which occur in the latter. It was written in the year of our Lord 63 ; two years before the death of St. Paul to whose proceedings it mainly refers.

The epistles of St. Paul are, one to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, one to the Galatians, one to the Ephesians, one to the Philippians, two to the Thessalonians, two to Timothy, one to Titus, one to Philemon, and one to the Hebrews. The epistle to the Romans was written at Corinth, in the

year of our Lord 57. The first to the Corinthians, at Ephesus, about the year 56; the second to the same Church in 58, at Philippi. To the Galatians, St. Paul wrote from Corinth about the year 53; to the Ephesians, from Rome, during the season of his first imprisonment, in the year 61; to the Philip-pians from the same place, in 62; in which year, and from which place, he likewise transmitted his epistle or letter to the Colossians. The first epistle to the Thessalonians is one of the earliest of which St. Paul was the author. It was written at Corinth, in 52; and the second following soon after, is held by the best authorities to have been composed before the apostle proceeded forth on his travels. The date of the first epistle to Timothy has not been very accurately fixed. But the second, between the writing of which and the dispatch of the former a considerable interval seems to have occurred, was written at Rome, A. D. 65, not long before the apostle's martyrdom. It is probable, therefore, that the former letter may have been composed about A. D. 53; a date to which some able authorities refer it. A like doubt hangs over the precise age of the epistle to Titus, though the year 52 or 53 is generally preferred. St. Paul has himself fixed the date of his letter to Philemon; it was written from Rome in A. D. 62. His epistle to the Hebrews has opened to critics a much wider field of inquiry. But for the purposes of my present work, it may suffice to state, that the weight of evidence assigns its authorship to St. Paul, and that it appears to have been composed in Rome, between the years 61 and 64.

Of the seven catholic or general epistles, one was written by St. James, two by St. Peter, three by St. John, and one by St. Jude. St. James, who was

not the brother of John, but the son of Cleopas, a near relative, and hence called, according to Jewish practice, the brother of our Lord, became, after the martyrdom of Stephen, president, or bishop of the Church in Jerusalem, and suffered martyrdom there, A. D. 62. His epistle, or letter, which is addressed to converted Jews in all parts of the world, seems to have been written in the year 61.

Peter, the author of the two epistles which come next in order, was a native of Bethsaida, on the coast of the sea of Galilee, and, with his brother Andrew, became one of the first and most faithful followers of Jesus. His letters, though dated from Babylon, are generally understood to have been written at Rome, to which city both he and the apostle John gave, because of its size, its wickedness, and, as they believed, its approaching ruin, the name of Babylon. Both letters are addressed to the strangers scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, &c., by which is meant the Jews who had settled in these different provinces, and of whom multitudes had been present at Jerusalem, at the Feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was given to the twelve. The first epistle was written in the year of our Lord, 63; the second in 65,—the same year in which St. Peter suffered martyrdom.

The same John, whom the Evangelists describe as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," wrote the three next epistles, all of which bear his name. The first hardly deserves to be called an epistle. It is not addressed to any church, or to any person or persons in particular. It is rather a treatise, from the study of which, believers all over the world might derive edification; and there is no controversy in it, in the proper meaning of that term. The second, inscribed to "the elect lady,"

or "to the Lady Electa," goes over the same ground as the first, only in fewer words. The third was written to a person called Gaius, to caution him against the designs of one Diotrephes, and to commend Demetrius to his friendship. We are not able to say in what city these persons lived, or of what church they were members.

All St. John's epistles seem to have been written about the same time; namely, between the year 68, and the close of the first century. But the exact date of each cannot now be fixed.

Jude, or Judas, the author of the concluding epistle, was the same disciple who, at the last supper, put to our Lord the memorable question, "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?" He appears to have survived all his fellow-labourers, except John; and wrote his epistle, which is a general one, about the year 70.

Of the Book of Revelation it is unnecessary to say more, than that it seems to have been compiled in the year 96, or 97, from visions granted to the Apostle while he worked in the mines at Patmos, whither the Emperor Domitian banished him nine years previously. It describes the Church as having already suffered persecution, and as destined to be tried again and again in various ways; and while it praises societies which had remained faithful, it threatens the weak and the wavering with total loss of Divine light. It is in many of its passages darkened still by the mists of the future.

I subjoin a list of terms which occur in the New Testament, with an explanation of each.

TIME.

A day	-	12 hours, from 6 in morn. to 6 in even.
A night	-	12 hours, from 6 in even. to 6 in morn.
A watch	-	3 hours; making four in each night.
A week	-	7 days.
The Sabbath	-	The seventh day.
A month	-	4 weeks.
A year	-	354 days, 8 hours.

The day of twelve hours always begins at six in the evening: "the evening and the morning were the day."

PERSONS.

A Pharisee. — A separatist, who claimed to be peculiarly holy, and held the traditions to be of equal value with the written Scriptures.

A Sadducee. — One who rejected the traditions, and denied the existence of angels and spirits, and the possibility of a resurrection.

Essenes. — Fanatics, who abjured marriage, dwelt in communities by themselves, had all their goods in common, and reared and brought up orphan children.

Herodians. — Persons who made their religion conform to the times, and flattered Herod.

Priests, Chief Priests. — The descendants of Aaron, who ministered about holy things.

Samaritans. — A race made up of many tribes, who accepted the five Books of Moses, and worshipped Jehovah on Mount Gerizim, where they once had a temple.

Rabbins or Doctors. — Teachers of the Law.

Scribes and Lawyers. — Copyists and writers on the Mosaic Law.

Galilæans. — Men who considered it unlawful to obey a heathen magistrate.

Zelots. — Persons who under pretence of zeal for the Law, were ready to commit murder, or any other crime.

Elders. — Members of the Sanhedrim or council of seventy.

Officers. — Sheriffs, bailiffs, executioners.

Israelites, such as Nicodemus. — Persons of lineal descent from Jacob.

Hebrew of Hebrews. — The same.

Proselyte of the Covenant. — A Gentile circumcised and admitted into the Church of the Temple,

Proselyte of the Gate. — A Gentile who worshipped Jehovah, but had not been circumcised.

Libertines. — Freed men of Rome, who, whether circumcised or not, worshipped Jehovah in their own synagogues.

Nazarenes. — Jews who professed Christianity.

Apostles. — Men sent by the Lord to preach his gospel. Twelve were called by himself: St. Paul was afterwards added to their number.

Deacons. — Officers ordained by the Apostles to attend to the poor. They also preached and baptized.

Angels of Churches. — The Bishops or Chief Pastors.

Presbyters or Elders. — Pastors of Churches.

Procurators. — Presidents or governors of provinces, sent from Rome.

Tetrarchs. — Persons who governed four provinces each.

Proconsuls. — Deputies of Provinces.

Chief-Captain. — The governor of a post, or commander of a division or small army.

Centurion. — A military commander of a hundred men.

Publicans. — Tax-gatherers, appointed by the Roman government.

CHAP. XLIII.

THE GOSPELS ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW,
ST. MARK, ST. LUKE, AND ST. JOHN.

BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND OF CHRIST.

B. C. 1.—It was in the year from the creation of the world 4004, from the building of Rome 753, when Augustus Cæsar swayed the imperial sceptre, and Herod, surnamed the Great, filled the tributary throne of Judah, that a priest named Zacharias, while attending to his course of duty in the temple, was favoured by an extraordinary visitation. An angel of God stood before him and said that his wife, Elizabeth, should have a son — that the child so born should go before the face of the Lord to prepare his way, and that the name of John should be conferred upon him. Now Zacharias was an old man, and his wife Elizabeth, who had never borne a child, had likewise advanced far into years. Like his great ancestor Abraham, under similar circumstances, he lacked faith to accept the assurance, and was told that he should continue dumb till the promise received its fulfilment. The former part of this announcement was accomplished on the instant: the tongue of Zacharias became tied, and so continued till the days were numbered, and his son John came into the world.

Meanwhile the same heavenly messenger who had warned the priest of God's purposes, was sent,

after an interval of about six months, to Nazareth, a village of Galilee, where dwelt a cousin of Elizabeth, by name Mary, being a virgin, though betrothed to a man of her own tribe, Joseph the carpenter. Both Joseph and Mary, though poor and in a humble condition of life, were of royal descent. They alike derived their origin from David; the former through Solomon his eldest, the latter through Nathan, his youngest son by Bathsheba. They therefore united, in their own persons, a legitimate right to the crown of Judah. But schemes of ambition had never entered into their minds, and they were content with their poverty. To Mary the angel announced that she should become, as yet unwedded, the mother of a son, "who shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." The virgin listened with amazement and natural doubt. But when the angel went on to say, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee," all her misgiving vanished. She bowed the head, and made answer, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

Time passed, and at the appointed season Elizabeth was delivered of a son. She had previously been visited by her cousin Mary, whom in the language of prophecy, she greeted as "the mother of her Lord;" and now, in obedience to the instructions which her husband gave, she desired that the child should be called John. Her kinsfolks objected to the name. Not one of all their house had borne it, why should it be given to this child, often

prayed for, and now at last granted. But Zacharias settled the dispute. He called for his tablets, and wrote, "His name is John." Immediately the good man's faculty of speech was restored. He burst forth into a song or hymn of praise, wherein the destinies of his son were foreshadowed; and all who heard departed wondering "what manner of child this should be."

We hear no more of John for many years. It is probable that his parents, far advanced into the shadow of their days at the time of his birth, did not long survive that event; and that he was taken by the Essenes, and by them brought up in the stern discipline of their own practices. But however this may be, the only mention made of his childhood and early youth by the inspired writers is, that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the desert (where the Essenes had a settlement) till the day of his showing unto Israel."

Meanwhile Joseph and Mary, having fulfilled the conditions of their betrothal, came together as man and wife. For it was the practice among the Jewish parents to betroth their children, sometimes in infancy; the young people being allowed to defer the completion of the contract till circumstances enabled them to undertake the responsibilities of a wedded life. Joseph found that his bride was already about to become a mother; and the law being very severe in such cases, he took counsel with himself to send her away privately, in order to avoid the scandal and the pain of a public execution. But the Lord turned aside his purposes. It was shown to him that she whom he suspected of crime was in truth a favoured instrument in the hands of Jehovah; and Mary, received into her

new home, was treated by her husband with marked respect and kindness.

It was the custom of the Roman government, as well under the consulate as under the empire, to order from time to time a census to be made of all persons enjoying the rights and privileges of citizenship, in whatever part of the world they might be resident. Augustus Cæsar first included in his lists all subjects of the crown, whether citizens or not; and treating Judah rather as a conquered than as a dependent kingdom, he ordered a census to be taken there as well as elsewhere. This decree, of which circumstances had suspended the execution, came into force soon after Joseph had taken home his wife, and parties being directed to enrol their names in the towns and cities to which their families belonged, Joseph and Mary, as descendants of King David, went up to Bethlehem that they might there be enrolled. They arrived at a time when the inn or caravansary was full, yet Mary's days were accomplished. There was no house to which she could retire, no home to shelter her; and so in the stable she gave birth to her son, and laid him to sleep his first living sleep in a manger. But not unheralded was this mysterious being brought into the world. Shepherds, watching their flocks in the fields hard by, saw "the glory of God shining round about them," and heard from a divine messenger that the Messiah was born, and that they would find him "wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly," continues St. Luke, "there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

The shepherds rose in haste, ran into the town,

and found the child where the angel had directed them to seek him. Meanwhile, afar off, in a remote province of that empire over which Daniel once presided and Nebuchadnezzar reigned, there rose, to greet the gaze of wise and good men who had long looked for the Deliverer, a star or meteor of surpassing brightness. They remembered the words which Balaam had spoken, and the striking metaphors of the great founder of their school, and coming to the conclusion that this was the star of God's Christ, they determined to follow whithersoever it might lead. For it was not a stationary star or illumination. It pointed the way to the land of promise, and they travelled on under its guidance.

Meanwhile the child being circumcised on the eighth day after his birth, received the name of Jesus. At the appointed season also, namely, in forty days, Joseph and his mother presented him in the temple; and offered, being poor, the poor man's offering to the Lord, "two turtle doves." But here the presence of the Holy One in his own place did not pass unrecognised. An aged priest, called Simeon, to whom it had been revealed that he should not die till he had seen God's Christ, took Jesus in his arms, and prayed, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And Anna, a prophetess, coming in at the instant, "gave thanks unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Having fulfilled these requirements of the law under which they lived, Joseph and Mary returned with the child to Bethlehem, where they appear to have dwelt for some time. They became, as was to be expected, subjects of intense curiosity to all

the inhabitants of the place ; and the feeling spread, not unmixed with fear, to the capital, and to the palace, when strangers from the far east, arrived in the city, and asked for him "who was born King of the Jews." These were the wise men, to whom the star had appeared many days before, and who, following its guidance, had reached Jerusalem, full of wonder and reverence. The purport of their inquiries was soon communicated to Herod. Conscious of his own unpopularity, and in constant dread of an insurrection, the king sent instantly for the Doctors and Scribes, and demanded of them where the Scriptures said that Christ should be born. They told him that Bethlehem was the place, and in a moment all the tales which he had heard of Jesus, and of the manner of his birth, rose in shapes of terror into his mind. He called the wise men in, desired them to go and discover where the child lay, and charged them to return and make him aware, that he too might go and worship him.

The wise men took the road to Bethlehem, and beheld once more their guiding star in the sky. It settled over the house where Joseph and Mary dwelt, and entering as suppliants, they offered to the infant Jesus, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But being warned in a vision that they should not give to Herod the information which he sought, they followed a different road on their return home. They were scarce gone ere in a dream Joseph learned that there would be danger to the child if he lingered where he was. Early in the morning, therefore, he rose, and taking Mary and her son with him, he fled into Egypt.

Herod waited impatiently for the information which he had charged the eastern strangers to bring.

It did not come, and he saw that he had been deceived. Whereupon, being more and more satisfied that a great rival to his throne had appeared, he fell upon a monstrous device, in order to stifle the danger ere it could mature itself. He sent out a band of men with directions to kill every child in Bethlehem, from two years old and downwards. The cruel edict was obeyed, though he against whom it had been directed escaped its fury. And it was avenged, too; for within five days of the wholesale murder the tyrant was smitten with a loathsome disease, and died shortly afterwards in extreme agony. He left behind him three sons, Archelaus, Philip, and Herod Antipas. To the first, whose cruelties seem to have been as savage as his own, he bequeathed Judæa, Idumea, and Samaria. The second succeeded to provinces, which though not particularised in sacred history, I may as well name — Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, Panea, and Batanæa. Galilee and Peræa fell to the share of the last, of whom more hereafter.

CHAP. XLIV.

THE GOSPELS — *continued.*

RETURN FROM EGYPT. CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE.
COMMENCEMENT OF HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY.

B. C. 1. — THE holy family had not resided long in Egypt ere intelligence of the death of Herod reached them; whereupon, in obedience to a heavenly vision, Joseph made ready to return to the land of

his fathers. But when he heard that Judah had fallen to the share of Archelaus, his heart failed him, and he ventured not to trust the child where the jurisdiction of the tyrant extended. He stopped short, therefore, at Nazareth, which lay within the territories bequeathed to Herod Antipas, and there took up his abode. Neither his career, nor that of Jesus, is marked for a time by any striking incident; and tradition goes no farther respecting either than to say, that Joseph pursued his occupation as a carpenter, and that the youthful Messiah grew in favour with God and man.

It was during this interval that Judah's memorable prophecy, delivered just before his death in the land of Goshen, received its accomplishment. Indignant at the cruelties of Archelaus, which drove the Jewish people into rebellion, the Emperor Augustus removed him from the throne; and took the opportunity of effecting a revolution in the government which he had long meditated. Judæa was reduced to the rank of a province. A Procurator was sent to take charge of it, and the last remnant of independence to which the people still clung was taken away from them.

A. D. 12.—Such was the political state of the country, when Joseph and Mary, carrying the child Jesus along with them, went up to celebrate the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem. They performed their devotions and departed. But when they had accomplished the first day's homeward journey, they discovered to their consternation that the child was not with them. They hurried back, and after a protracted search, found him in the temple, sitting among the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions. It is clear from the account given by the Evangelist of this transaction,

that the spirit of the Messiah had already begun to stir within him. "Why," demanded his mother, "hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." "How is it," was his answer, "that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The saying was a dark one to all who heard it; but his mother kept it in her heart.

A.D. 29.—Time passed, and farther changes both at Rome and in Jerusalem transferred the supreme authority in the empire and in Judæa to new lands. Augustus Cæsar died, and was succeeded by his son-in-law Tiberius, who, removing the Procurator whom he found in office, established at Jerusalem first one Gratus, and, after an interval of eleven years, Pontius Pilate. High priests rose and fell, likewise, according as they showed signs of subserviency, or otherwise, to the established order of things, till a sort of succession established itself among them, and each held office for one year only. Nor was God's great work slack of coming on. There appeared all at once, in the thinly peopled districts that skirted the Jordan, a man towards whom public attention was drawn. He came forth from the desert arrayed in a cloak of camel's skin, which was fastened by a leathern girdle round his loins; and with an eloquence which had not been heard in Israel since the days of the old prophets, he called upon the people to repent, "for the kingdom of God was at hand." Let it not be forgotten that of the speedy arrival of the kingdom of God, no man in Judæa then doubted. They had studied their own Scriptures, and fixed the present as the time when the long-expected Messiah should appear; and they found in John the verification of a popular belief, that Elijah should return to the earth, and be

his forerunner. Crowds, therefore, resorted to John from every town and village near. Soldiers on their march stopped to hear him and to receive his blessing, and the Pharisees themselves, half hopeful, half suspicious of an imposture, sent to demand of him what he was. John received all that came, and dealt fairly by them. The poor people he baptized to repentance; the soldiers he blessed and charged to be true to their trusts; of the Pharisees he demanded "who had warned them, a generation of vipers, to flee from the wrath to come." He told them, moreover, that he was not Christ — nor Elias — nor any of the old prophets risen from the grave — but "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

A. D. 30. — John was thus labouring in the field to which the Spirit had called him, when a consciousness that his hour was come, impelled Jesus, the son of Mary, to go forth from his retirement. He had attained the age when prophets were accustomed to enter on the duties of their office in Israel. He was about thirty years old, and that no token might be wanting either of his willingness to adhere to the national customs, or of the strict unity that existed between John's doctrine and his own, he sought out John, and requested baptism at his hands. John does not appear to have had any previous intercourse with his mysterious relative. Brought up in the desert, his converse had been more with God than with man; yet, the moment Jesus approached, he recognised the "Lamb of God," and would have fain excused himself from baptizing him who needed no baptism. On the remonstrance of our Lord, however, John yielded. Jesus was baptized, and as he ascended out of the

Jordan, "Lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and John saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

From that hour John's star grew pale and went down, while that of Jesus rose. Yet not without adhering to still another of the customs of his nation, would the Lord begin his public ministry. He wandered into the desert, and throughout a protracted fast of forty days and forty nights, meditated over the gigantic work to which his Father had called him. Strange and dark visions crossed his mind in this interval. He was tempted of the devil. Now it was suggested to him, that one, circumstanced as he was, had no occasion to suffer for lack of food: "Command these stones that they be made bread." Now the national dream of a triumphant Messiah was pressed upon him as the truth. "He took him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." And last and not least trying of the whole, the impulse to escape, even by self-destruction, from so vast a toil, and such a cruel recompense, took a definite shape. "Cast thyself down (from the pinnacle of the temple) for it is written, he shall give his angels charge over thee, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." All these sore temptations the Lord sustained and withstood, till "the devil departed from him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

A. D. 30. — Having triumphed in this deadly conflict, Jesus, now doubly the Messiah or Christ, that is, "the anointed," returned across the river, and

began to preach the glad tidings of salvation. Crowds came to listen wherever he showed himself, and two men who had begun with following John, namely, Andrew and the same John to whose narrative we are so much indebted, forsook, at his own bidding, their first master, and attached themselves to Christ. They felt indeed that they had found the Saviour of the world; and not long afterwards, Simon, the brother of Andrew, at a later period called Peter, with Philip and Nathanael, joined themselves to their company. These were the first who made an open avowal of their acceptance of Jesus as the promised deliverer, and they never afterwards quitted him.

From this date, during an interval of rather less than three years, the manner of our Lord's life can be faithfully described only by transferring, one by one, from the New Testament, the records of his gracious deeds, and most wise and gracious discourses. His days, and many of the hours of his nights, were devoted to the moral and religious instruction of his people. He spoke as never man spake before, — explaining to the crowds which everywhere assembled to listen, God's will, as it bears upon the dealings of man with man here, and God's goodness in preparing, for such as serve him faithfully in this life, an eternity of honour and glory in another. All that sounds stern in the old law, he revoked by fulfilling it. It was no longer to be "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you." It was no longer to be "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," but "I say unto you, resist not evil; but whosoever shall

smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him thy left also." Instead of the absolute prohibition, too often violated in the letter, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," it was, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." Hypocrisy, evil-speaking, guile, ostentation, a too great anxiety for the very necessities of life, anger, revenge, pride, vain glory, — were not only all prohibited, but their opposites enjoined and enforced. "Let not thy left know what thy right hand doeth." "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut thy door." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." These, with the blessings pronounced upon "the poor in spirit," "the meek," "the mourners," "the merciful," "the pure in heart," "the peace-makers," make up, when taken together, a code of morals, such as had never, till the Lord came, been dreamed of among men, such as God alone, speaking through his mouth, could have inculcated.

Nor were the Lord's acts at variance with the tenor of his teaching. He healed the sick, he fed the hungry, he gave sight to the blind, he cleansed the lepers, he cast out devils, he raised the dead. When he was reviled he reviled not again, when men threatened he cursed not, — but passing from town to town, and from village to village, he shed round him, wherever he appeared, the blessings of health, and peace of mind, and sound and holy instruction. Under these circumstances I must endeavour, rather to let my young readers know what were the most prominent events in the Lord's most gracious career, than seek to lead them minutely through it. And it may facilitate this

arrangement if we divide his ministry into portions, according to the number of the Passovers at which, subsequently to his baptism by John, he appears to have been present.

CHAP. XLV.

THE GOSPELS — *continued.*

MARRIAGE AT CANA OF GALILEE. OUR LORD'S SECOND PASSEVER. PROCEEDINGS IN JUDÆA AND GALILEE.

THE public ministry of Jesus Christ appears to have begun in one of the latter months of the Jewish year. The scene of his earliest labours was Nazareth, — where neither the wisdom of his doctrines, nor the blameless tenor of his life, availed to overcome the prejudices which a familiar knowledge of his kindred and connections had awakened among the inhabitants. But his first miracle was performed in Cana, a town of Galilee, whither he proceeded with his mother and his disciples, to be present at a marriage feast. Perhaps the young reader will better understand both the object of this gracious act, and the terms in which the inspired writer describes it, if he be made aware of some of the usages which prevailed among the Jews on these occasions.

I have elsewhere explained, that the betrothal of persons of the opposite sexes was a ceremony which occurred among the Jews often long before the marriage could be conveniently fulfilled. It was at the

time of the betrothal that whatever of ceremony attended the entrance into so serious an engagement took place. The party seeking a bride, demanded her, through a friend, formally of her father, and after paying down the portion or dower agreed upon, the bridegroom ratified the contract by giving to the bride herself either a written document or a piece of silver, in the presence of witnesses. Years might elapse before the engagement thus entered into went further, yet the bride was all the while as completely bound, as if her bridegroom had taken her home, though the young people held no personal intercourse, nor perhaps saw one another. By and by, however, when circumstances seemed to authorise the completion of the contract, the friend of the bridegroom (his paranymp), who had managed all preliminaries for him, set about arranging the "marriage feast." It lasted seven days. All the men invited to it were supplied, at the bridegroom's expense, with wedding garments, — generally white; and any person presenting himself in other than a wedding-garment was repelled as an intruder. The master, or author of the feast, reclined at the head of one of the tables, placing the most honoured of his guests; next him. And the wants of all were attended to by a governor — not a guest, but a sort of upper domestic or butler, whose duty it was to pass from table to table, and see that nothing of which the master's friends stood in need was wanting.

The Jews were not a drunken race, and it belonged to the governor or ruler of the feast to take care that no excess was committed, even at a marriage supper. He himself tasted the wines to ascertain that they were good, but did no more; and as men and women never sat together on such

occasions, the men exercised themselves in trials of wit, and so wiled the hours away. Nor were the women without their amusements. At the appointed time, troops of virgins bearing lighted lanterns, went with the bridegroom and his friends to conduct the bride, by night, to her future home. Finally, at the end of the week, or sooner if the faintest token of disorder appeared, the governor of the feast gave a signal to break up, and all the guests departed. Without any religious ceremony, therefore, or other tie than that of the betrothal, the bridegroom and bride thus became man and wife.

His marriage feast being the great event in his life, the Jew often put himself to serious inconvenience in order that it might be held with due solemnity. A short-coming in the viands or the wine, on such an occasion, stamped him ever after as a niggard, and his friends fell off from him. It was characteristic of the beautiful religion of the Gospel that its Divine founder should seek to guard one of God's rational creatures from so sharp an evil. Accordingly, when his mother, who knew the straitened circumstances of the bridegroom, came to Jesus and told him that the stock of wine was exhausted, he did not treat the announcement as a matter too insignificant to be noticed. On the contrary, he desired the servants, who were near, to fill certain water pots which stood by for purposes of ablution, with water, and to bear them, when so filled, to the master of the feast. They obeyed his behest, and wine enough to carry the banquet to a legitimate close was provided.

A.D. 30. — An act of kindness which came so home to the feelings of all by whom it was witnessed, drew towards our Lord an increased amount of public attention. The number of his disciples

increased from day to day, but he did not, on that account, linger long in Galilee : nor was his sojourn in Capernaum, to which he next proceeded, more protracted. The season of the Passover drew near, and the Lord, attended by the twelve, to whom the title of Apostles was in after times given, went up to Jerusalem to be present at the feast. Here his power as well as his zeal in God's honour was exhibited in a very wonderful manner. It will be borne in mind that from the most distant of their settlements, all religious Jews came up at the three great festivals, that they might offer their gifts of sacrifice and gratitude in the temple at Jerusalem. Great inconvenience could not but attend the driving of bullocks or sheep, or carrying of other articles of oblation by dwellers at a distance ; and the custom was permitted to them of making purchase, within the city itself, of such things as the law required. And there arose, in consequence, a class of persons who, making a livelihood out of this traffic, bribed the priests for permission to set up their stalls within the court of the temple itself. Nothing could be more at variance with both the letter and the spirit of the Mosaic dispensation ; and our Lord's indignation was greatly stirred as he gazed upon the scene. He armed himself with a scourge of small cords, and overturning the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, he drove the profane crowd beyond the temple precincts, without, as it would appear, the smallest resistance on their parts. " It is written," said he, " that my house is a house of prayer ; but ye have made it a den of thieves."

While the hypocritical and the proud chafed at this exercise of authority, so bold a deed drew to Jesus not a few of the better disposed ; among

whom was Nicodemus, a man learned in the law, who came to the Lord by night, and held with him some deeply interesting conversation. To him the Lord spake of that second birth, or regeneration, which marks in every man born according to the flesh his entrance into the kingdom or church of God upon earth. It was on this occasion, likewise, that, on a general appeal to the people, he likened his own body to God's temple, and showed that, if it were destroyed then, or at any future period, he would himself build it up again in three days. And many eyes began to be turned towards him, not without a hope that the day of Israel's deliverance was at hand.

From Jerusalem the Lord proceeded through many of the towns and villages of Judæa, preaching the gospel, and gaining a constant accession to the number of his disciples. It was, however, exclusively from the humbler walks of life that men came to him. People laden with the memory of sins past, heard him likewise with gladness; for he spake to the former of a state beyond the grave, in which all that is unequal here shall be made even; and he told the latter that God was able and willing to pardon where man knows not how to forgive. The Scribes and Pharisees, on the contrary, reviled and traduced him in all their assemblies, and threatened him with violence. Indeed, so formidable were their proceedings, that at the end of about eight months, he was forced to shift the scene and retire into Galilee. He had not taken the latter step, however, before two events occurred, both of which demand particular notice.

John the Baptist had accomplished his appointed task. He had prepared the Lord's way for him, and continuing to denounce sin wherever it showed

itself, he reproved Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and Idumæa, because he lived in adultery with his brother's wife. The Baptist was seized, and cast into prison ; and hearing, in his dungeon, of the progress which Jesus made, he sent two of his disciples to ask whether in him the Messias was indeed found. It is not distinctly told whether John himself, cut off from all intercourse with the living world, entertained any serious doubts on this head, or whether he desired only that his disciples should become personally acquainted with Jesus, and learn his doctrine. But the result was that the men employed on this mission embraced the faith of Christ, and were added to the number of those whom our Lord took into his familiar confidence.

The second incident to which I have referred, took place at Sychar, a city of Samaria, through which province the traveller passing from Jerusalem into Galilee, must needs pass. Here the Lord encountered a woman, to whom he made known the great truth, that the time was at hand when throughout God's universe, no one spot of earth or of sea should be more sacred than another. "The time cometh and now is, when neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men (exclusively) worship the Father. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

From Sychar the Lord proceeded into Galilee, and in Cana wrought another miracle of mercy, by raising from a sick bed the son of a Roman centurion, who lay at the point of death. He did this deed, too, without so much as seeing the patient ; and the grateful father, as he believed the Lord's assurance, so on finding that his child was given back to him, he became, with all his household, a follower of Christ. Other proofs of the Lord's absolute

dominion over nature, and the ills and accidents that appertain to it, were abundantly given. He cured the mother of Peter's wife of a fever; he caused his disciples who had toiled all night and caught nothing, to enclose in their nets such a multitude of fishes, that they found some difficulty in securing the prize. He cast out the devil or source of his malady, from a maniac, after the wretched man, amid his ravings, had acknowledged him to be God's Christ. To give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, strength to the feeble, health to the sick, was his daily work. Once when the crowd could not otherwise reach him, they took off the tiling, which, as in other eastern houses, covered the courtyard, round which its apartments were built, and let down a paralytic on his bed, before Jesus. The Lord healed him, after he had said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," to the unspeakable indignation of the Pharisees, who could not, in that presence, venture to affirm, that he to whom God had given such power to act, was not by the same God authorised to speak. Yet with all this the Lord threw no damp or gloom over the kindly intercourses of society. He partook of the hospitalities of such as offered them in a friendly spirit. He dined with Matthew the publican, in defiance of the prejudice which rendered all Jews who exercised the publican's calling, objects of abhorrence to their countrymen. And he rebuked, without mercy, the hypocritical proceedings of the Pharisees, "who devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers." In a word, the first year of his public ministry was devoted to the great purpose of leading men to consider the object of God's laws, rather than their letter; and to teach them that religion is nothing, or worse than nothing,

unless it elevate men's hopes, purify their hearts, and regulate all their proceedings — public as well as private — according to the dictates of justice, mercy, and truth.

CHAP. XLVI.

THE GOSPELS — *continued.*

SECOND YEAR OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY. HIS MANY MIRACLES. THE TRANSFIGURATION. LAZARUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

A. D. 31. — THE second year of our Lord's ministry upon earth bears, as might be expected, a close resemblance, in the details of his most gracious words and deeds, to the first. He is still the dispenser of mercy wherever he goes. We find him again in Jerusalem at the season of the Passover, drawing towards himself the attention of thousands. A poor cripple who, year after year, had come up in the hope of deriving benefit from the waters of the pool of Siloam, receives his cure under circumstances of which he had never dreamed. Others took no note of him, and hence before he could reach the margin of the pool, the sanatory power had departed from the water. "For an angel," says St. John, "went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." But the Lord saw and had compassion on the cripple, and commanded him to "rise, take up his bed, and walk." And when the Pharisees endeavoured to found a charge upon this act, because it had been done on the Sabbath day,

his answer not only put to shame the hypocrisy of the accusers, but asserted his own claim, more distinctly than had yet been done, to the character of God's Christ. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." In like manner he declared himself to be Lord even of the Sabbath day, by defending his disciples for having "rubbed a little corn in their hands and eaten it as they passed through a field." He did not, however, remain in the capital long after the conclusion of the festival. The Pharisees and the Herodians assumed so hostile a spirit that it was necessary for him to withdraw; and Galilee became again the scene of his ministrations. It was at this time that he separated his followers into classes, appointing twelve to be Apostles, and seventy to be Disciples, and employing both, though at different times, and as it would seem, each with its peculiar share of authority, to preach and baptize. In this year also, he delivered his memorable sermon on the mount, having selected for the theatre of that magnificent oration, an eminence not far from Capernaum. We read, moreover, for the first time in the course of this season, of his restoring the dead to life. At the entrance of a little town called Nain, he met a funeral procession, which was carrying the remains of a widow's son to the grave. He stopped the bier, and at his bidding the young man arose. There was no resisting such evidence as this, except by men whom self-interest and national pride had entirely blinded. The Pharisees, the priests, the doctors, the lawyers, —all who had read the prophecies as indicating a triumphant Messiah, and were personally concerned in expecting such to come, — rejected Jesus, and sought to kill him. The poor, the single-minded, the religious, the seekers after truth, accept-

ed him as being what he now claimed to be—God's Christ; and though they, like their rulers, expected that sooner or later David's throne would again be set up in Jerusalem, they left to him the choice of his own times and seasons, being satisfied of this and this only, that he was the Messiah whom Jehovah had appointed to accomplish the great work.

As I cannot doubt that all who read this little work, will read likewise the inspired narratives from which its contents are drawn, I will not endeavour to follow our Lord's progress from place to place in the order of his journeys. Enough is done when I state, that he travelled again into Galilee, skirted Phœnicea, crossed the lake or sea of Gennesaret to visit the country of the Gergasenes, that he traversed Samaria to revisit Judæa, and left neither town, nor village, nor even the desert places of any of these provinces, till he had stamped upon each some memorial of his goodness. Twice on the hill side he fed thousands of persons, by miraculously multiplying the food which his disciples had to give. On one occasion seven thousand, on another four, had enough to eat in "five barley loaves and two small fishes." He walked upon the sea, and it sustained him. He rebuked the winds and the waves in a storm, and they became still. The daughter of the ruler of a synagogue he restored to life, while the hired mourners were laughing to scorn his gracious words, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth." Yet these, with many more of the same sort, which I need not stop to particularise, deserve to be spoken of as the least important of the Lord's proceedings in the second year of his ministry. He strove now, by little and little, to lift the veil which still darkened the minds of his disciples. He began to ask them,

"Whom do men say that I am?" and he commended Peter for declaring "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." At the same time he showed them that "the son of man must be betrayed into the hands of wicked men;" that "he should suffer many things, be crucified and rise again." And seeing that his words distracted more than they cheered the hearts of his followers, he adopted the following expedient for giving them an insight into the real nature of his kingdom.

Taking with him the three among his disciples who appear to have enjoyed the largest share of his confidence — namely, Peter, James, and John, he went up to the top of a mountain "And," says St. Matthew, "he was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And behold there appeared unto him Moses and Elias talking with him." Let it not be forgotten that among all the illustrious persons who lived under the old dispensation, these were the most illustrious. From the lips of Moses the Israelites had received their law, and Elias or Elijah, when it had all but ceased to be obeyed, restored it. Moreover of Moses and Elias, it may well be doubted whether either of them underwent the natural fate of man; for of the one the place of sepulture remains to this day unknown; while the other, as sacred history tells, was carried from earth to a higher state "by the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Yet Moses and Elias this day talked with Jesus. What the subject of their conversation was we are not told. The disciples were too much awestruck to take notice of this particular; but they all saw the bright cloud which overshadowed them, and all heard the voice which

declared "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

Having charged them not to make public this vision till after he should have accomplished the purpose for which he had come into the world, our Lord descended with his companions into the plain, and healed there a demoniac child, whom his disciples, for lack of faith, had failed to deliver from his bondage. He then journeyed on to Capernaum, instructing the crowds that attended on his steps in every part of their duty to God and man. Humility, a new virtue in the world,—forgiveness of injuries, till now esteemed a defect,—brotherly love extending as far as the human race are scattered, — formed a portion of the code of laws by which his kingdom was to be governed. He spoke, also, of God's exceeding mercy — of the joy with which in heaven the angels rejoice over a sinner who repenteth — of his own great errand, that sinners might be called to repentance,—and of the consequences to society of the adoption of so pure a creed. Nor was he neglectful to inculcate the great duty of obedience to the civil government under which men live. When required to pay tribute, though himself the natural heir of the throne — he not only did not refuse, but wrought a miracle that the means of obeying a legal demand might be supplied.

The feast of Tabernacles drew near; and the relatives of Jesus beginning to hope that he might after all be the Messiah, urged him to go up and declare himself in the capital, that the nation might have an opportunity either of accepting or rejecting him. But the relatives of Jesus, like the Jews in general, looked for a warlike Messiah, a character which the Lord himself repeatedly and carefully put from him. He declined, therefore, to act upon their

suggestion, and turning off from the direct route, made as if he intended to pass that festive season in Samaria. Moreover he embraced this opportunity of perfecting the constitution of his church or kingdom upon earth. For as on a former occasion he had sent out the twelve to preach, he now despatched the seventy through all the towns and villages round about, upon a similar mission. And while they were so engaged, he proceeded alone to Jerusalem. For a while he kept himself in retirement there, though many inquiries were made for him; but by and by he appeared in the temple, and the same results followed which on all former occasions had attended his ministry. The people followed him to learn and admire, the rulers and the Pharisees persecuted and sought to destroy him. And the fury of the latter class was deepened in proportion as he exposed their hypocrisy and reproved their vices. In particular when they brought before him a woman taken in adultery, and demanded his sanction to put the law in force, his answer was, "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone." Their consciences rose in arms against them, and they all slunk away. But they never forgot or forgave the reproof.

There dwelt at Bethany, a village removed but a few miles from Jerusalem, two sisters and a brother, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They were among the most devoted of the Lord's disciples; and in their house he used to spend most of his time, as often as business brought him to the capital. He followed his usual course on the present occasion; and when the feast came to an end, returned to Galilee. There he taught his disciples, once more gathered round him, the Lord's Prayer, and there, by degrees he strove to abstract their thoughts from the things of

earth and fix them on the things of heaven. We find him, however, again at Jerusalem, on the anniversary of the dedication*, where, by giving sight to a man who had been born blind, he drew down upon himself an increased amount of hatred from the Pharisees. Indeed, so threatening was their language, that he felt himself compelled to withdraw from Judæa altogether, and to travel into Petræa. Here tidings reached him that his friend Lazarus was ill, and his disciples urged him to go and raise the patient from his sick bed; but he took no notice of their request. At last it was told him that Lazarus was dead, and then he said, "Let us go to Bethany." They went. He found the house of their friends filled with mourners, and the bereaved sisters heart-broken; indeed, so touching was the spectacle, that it is recorded of Jesus himself, that "he wept." But Jesus came to make more and more known the power of God, and the object of his own mission. He called to Lazarus to come forth from the grave, where for four days he had lain, and restored him to the society of his kindred. It was, indeed, a marvellous act; and all the country rang with it; but it brought no favour to the Lord from the Pharisees. On the contrary, they forced him again to escape to Ephraim, a little town in the territory of Benjamin; where, until the season of the Passover returned, he seems to have resided.

* The anniversary of the dedication of the Temple by Ezra was kept as a national festival.

CHAP. XLVII.

THE GOSPELS—*continued.*

THE FOURTH PASSOVER. THE LAST SUPPER. THE CRUCIFIXION, RESURRECTION, AND ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

A. D. 33. — THE Lord knew that his hour was come, and he plainly informed his disciples of the fate that awaited him. They heard him with surprise and incredulity, for to the last they expected that he meant to seize and mount the throne of David. They therefore followed him still, nowise distrustful of the issue, except in one solitary case. Among the twelve, afterwards called apostles, there was one, who appears, earlier than the rest, to have discovered that Jesus was swayed by no views of worldly ambition; and who, therefore, in disgust, made up his mind, about this time, to leave him. His name was Judas, and he had the surname of Iscariot. The names of the others were Peter, Andrew, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Libbeus or Thaddeus, and Simon, a native of Cana of Galilee. Still Judas went with the rest, and became, together with his master, a guest in the house at Bethany, where an incident befel which seems to have converted his disappointment into personal rancour. While they sat at meat, Mary, their hostess, brought a box of very costly ointment, and, breaking it, anointed therewith the head of Jesus. "Why was this waste of the ointment made?" exclaimed Judas; "For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and given to the poor." But Jesus rebuked him, and vindicated the woman's act by saying, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she

hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good ; but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could : She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying." From that hour Judas became the bitter enemy of Christ, and he embraced the earliest opportunity of bargaining with the chief priests for his Lord's betrayal.

After spending the night at Bethany, Jesus took the road to Jerusalem, attended by a dense crowd which had collected in the town, partly to greet him, and partly to see Lazarus, the living man, who had once been dead. He travelled by Bethphage, a village on the side of the mount of Olives, which was inhabited principally by the families of the priests, and surrounded by groves of date and fig-trees. Near this place the Lord halted, till his disciples should bring from it a young ass, on which man had never before ridden ; and when they cast a garment over it, he mounted and rode on. His progress was a triumph. Multitudes greeted him with loud hosannahs. Boughs and garments were strewed in his way ; and thus he approached the temple. Here the priests met and reviled him. But while he mourned over Jerusalem as lost, because "she knew not her day," he told these bad men, that "If the people held their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

The Lord spent his days in the temple preaching righteousness, and prophesying of events to come. His evenings were passed among his friends at Bethany. But towards the end of the festival he again so exercised his authority as to rouse the angry feelings, not of rulers only, but of many among the giddy multitude. For the second time, he drove out of the courts of God's house them who bought and sold. Meanwhile the Sanhedrim

had met to consult what was to be done ; and Judas being called in, engaged, for thirty pieces of silver, to betray his Master. It was agreed, however, in order to avoid the danger of a tumult, that the arrest should not take place till after the paschal lamb had been eaten. The arrangement, as the conspirators imagined, was kept profoundly secret. Yet the Lord, who knew all things, knew what was in progress ; and with the feeling on his mind that the dark hour of his own sacrifice was come, he prepared to celebrate, for the last time, the great national festival with his disciples. The holy company assembled in an upper room, where the meal was eaten ; and then the Lord, breaking bread and giving it with wine to his followers, instituted, in the most solemn manner, the sacrament of his own last supper. After this he rose, and, girding himself with a towel, began to wash his disciples' feet, though not till he had warned them that one of their number should betray him. And now Judas, having his treason distinctly declared, quitted the apartment and went on his frightful business ; — while Jesus, taking the rest with him, walked to the garden of Gethsemane, that they might breathe the fresh and cool night air once more together. There a horrible agony overpowered him. Separating himself from the rest, he retired with Peter, James, and John, to a place apart ; and, desiring them to keep watch, he went a little farther into the recesses of the garden and prayed. There is no power in language to describe the scene that followed. Large drops as of blood were forced through his pores in his agony, while he cried " Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me : nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." The bitter cup was not removed. It could not be removed. He had come into the

world to save the world by drinking it, and he drank it to the dregs. For already while his followers, overcome by preternatural drowsiness, slept upon their posts, Judas, with a guard from the chief-priests, drew near. It was to no purpose that Peter drew his sword and smote with it one of the servants of the high-priest, and cut off his ear. Patient as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, Jesus gave himself up to his captors, and after healing the wounded man, was conducted to the house of Caiaphas, the high-priest's father-in-law, where the Sanhedrim had assembled to examine him.

When his disciples saw that their Lord yielded without resistance, a panic seized them, and they fled. Anxiety, however, and an earnest desire to watch the issue, induced Peter and John to overmaster their fears, and, following at a distance, they entered the house of Caiaphas, — Peter, as it would seem, stealthily. Now Peter had been warned by Jesus, while they sat together at the last supper, that ere the cock crew on the morrow he would deny him. But being full of zeal and quite intending to keep his promise, he declared that though he might die with his Lord,—deny him would he never. We know not what we do when we make rash protestations such as these; and Peter stands out for ever as a beacon to guard us against the sin of venturing upon them. He was charged with being a follower of Jesus thrice, and thrice he denied it. And then the cock crew; and Jesus, turning round, looked at him, and memories of the past came upon him with exceeding power, and he felt his own degradation. "He went out," says St. Luke, "and wept bitterly."

The Lord expected no justice before this tribunal, and he received none. Buffeted, spit upon, and

insulted, he was dragged, as soon as daylight returned, before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, where the leaders of the people charged him with an attempt to create a rebellion. Now Pilate had been guilty of some unjust and avaricious acts, which made him at once unpopular in Judæa, and little favoured at Rome. Further complaints against him might be attended with serious consequences; and hence, though avowing his conviction that there was no fault in Jesus, he lacked whatever courage might be required to dismiss the complaint, and set an innocent man free. He made an attempt, it is true, to shift the responsibility from his own shoulders to those of Herod. Hearing that Jesus was a Galilean by birth, he sent him to the Tetrarch, who chanced at that time to have visited Jerusalem; but no good came to the Lord from this proceeding. Herod sought only to gratify an idle curiosity: "He expected to see some miracle wrought," and when nothing of the kind was done, he became furious and gave over the captive to his guards. These arrayed him, insultingly, in a purple robe, and marched him back to the house of Pilate, where brutal men scourged him, and put a crown of thorns on his head. And so, bleeding and bruised, the sentence of crucifixion being passed on him, he was led away, amid a yelling and a maddened crowd, to the place of execution.

In a field called Golgotha, that is the place of skulls, three crosses had been erected, and to the centre one of the three, Jesus Christ was nailed. The others on his right and left, were occupied by thieves. It was about nine in the morning, answering to the third hour of the Jewish day, when this frightful deed was done. Till twelve the Lord hung in his agony, the chief priests calling upon him all the while, if he were indeed the

Christ, to come down, and they would believe. Numberless voices also, from among the crowd, shouted blasphemies and reproaches; and one of the thieves that suffered with him, took up the cry. It was not so with the other. "Dost thou not fear God," said he to his companion in guilt, "seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." And then, turning to Jesus, he cried, "Lord, remember me when thou comest to thy kingdom." Never since the world began, was faith more fervently and devoutly shown, and it received its reward. "Verily I say unto thee," was the Lord's reply, "to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." And now the Lord, looking down, saw his mother at the foot of the cross. Recognising her immediately, and turning to the disciple whom he loved, he committed her to the care of his faithful friend, and John accepted the charge. No word of reproach, however, no murmur or complaint, escaped the dying Saviour. "Father forgive them," was his prayer for his enemies; "they know not what they do." But mortal suffering did its work in his case as in the cases of other men. A frame acutely delicate, and therefore no inappropriate receptacle for the pure and holy spirit which it clothed, could not sustain the torture which the ruder frames of the thieves endured. When three hours were gone, he exclaimed in his anguish, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me!" and then all was over. God had not forsaken him. The great sacrifice was complete — the soul of the victim parted from its body, — and the work of redemption was accomplished.

But not without signs and great wonders did ~~us~~ give up the ghost. There was darkness over

the whole land, from the sixth to the ninth hour. The veil which separated the holy of holies from the temple, was rent in twain. The rocks split asunder, graves opened, and many of the dead arose. So fearful, indeed, were the prodigies which attended this most sublime and mysterious act of love and mercy, that the Roman centurion who commanded the troops set to watch the proceedings, exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God."

The crucifixion of Jesus, and of the thieves who died with him, occurred on Friday. The morrow was the Sabbath, which beginning, as has elsewhere been explained, at six o'clock in the evening, rendered it necessary that, without loss of time, the bodies should be removed. Accordingly, soldiers were directed to go and put the culprits out of pain by breaking their limbs, and then to cast their carcasses out of sight. The thieves they found still breathing; and they brake their legs as commanded. But Jesus was dead. No bone of him was broken; only a spear was thrust through his side into his heart, that certainty might be made doubly sure. And then Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man who had joined himself to Christ's followers, begged the body of Jesus, and obtained it. He and others of the disciples removed it from the cross. They wound it up hastily in linen garments, and carrying it to a tomb hewn out of the rock, in which as yet no dead had slept, they laid it, as they supposed, to take its eternal rest, and rolled a huge stone against the aperture. But they were not the only persons who cared for the body of Jesus. The high priests went to Pilate, and, informing him of the Lord's assurance, while in life, that on the third day from his execution he should rise again, they obtained leave to seal the stone with the public seal, and to set a guard over it. And all this being done, they

departed to their own homes, confident that a great imposture was defeated ; while the disciples, with the women who had attended Jesus in his ministrations, hid themselves, as those do who feel that all their hopes are blighted, and that they have become marks for the hostility of the world.

Heavily and sadly, for those who had at this time looked for the restoration of Israel, the hours rolled on. The Sabbath was past, and on the first day of the week the disciples had assembled to consider what course they ought to pursue, when, suddenly, and in a high state of excitement, Mary Magdalene, with Mary the mother of James and Salome, rushed into the chamber where they sat. They had marvellous tidings to tell. The stone was rolled back from the mouth of the grave. The guards were gone. Jesus their master was risen according to his promise. They had seen and conversed with the angels who had borne him from his grave, and Mary had heard the sound of his own well-known and beloved voice. What an announcement was this ! How were they to deal with it ? Two out of their number, Peter and John, obeying the first impulse that matured itself within them, ran to the grave. They found all things to be as the women had described. There sat two young men arrayed in long white garments, who told them not to seek the living among the dead ; and there, for the first time, they caught a gleam of the mighty truth, which, throughout years of his sojourn among them, the Lord had vainly endeavoured to make them feel and understand.

The fact of the Lord's resurrection was not, however, left to be vouched for, upon evidence so liable to misconstruction as this. During a space of forty days he repeatedly showed himself to his disciples. Two he accompanied in a sabbath day's journey from

Jerusalem to Emmaus, conversing and explaining to them the Scriptures as they went along; and making himself known as they sat at meat, by breaking of bread as in his mortal state he used to do. Others he encountered while they toiled at the business of fishing, and caused them to feel, as well as to recognise, his presence, by his gracious bearing towards them. And yet again, lest on the minds of any the shadow of doubt might remain, he suddenly appeared where Thomas had met his friends in a bolted chamber, and gave them his blessing. "Reach hither thy finger," said he to the disciple, "and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." Finally, when the appointed season came, he gathered about five hundred persons together, and led them forth out of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives. There to the eleven his last command was spoken. "Go ye and preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and that they might bend themselves with the better heart to the work, this gracious promise was added, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

The Lord's business on earth was completed. The foundations of his church were laid. Delivered from the prejudices which kept the rest of their countrymen blind, his disciples were at length beginning to understand, that not by war, nor through the strength of a fleshly arm, was Israel's kingdom to be restored. There remained but the closing scene in this marvellous drama to be enacted, and it came. While he yet spake in accents of blessing, "he was parted from them and carried up into heaven."

CHAP. XLVIII.

BOOK OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST. PETER. JOHN.
STEPHEN. PHILIP.

A. D. 33. — I HAVE more than once taken an opportunity to point out, that, in the popular expectation of a triumphant Messiah, which prevailed during our Lord's day, the twelve who were admitted into his closest confidence, shared to the last. Even after his resurrection, while attending him to the mount where it was God's will that he should be parted from them, they continued to ask, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" But "while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

The words of the angels stirred strange thoughts in their minds. They remembered now that the Lord had often foretold both the things which they had just witnessed, and those of which the angels spake; and visions of the truth,—imperfect indeed, yet bright and consolatory,—rose up before them. They felt that some great work would be assigned them; and though as yet they could not tell of what nature it might be, they returned to Jerusalem, that they might there give themselves to continual supplication and prayer. One point, however, they did settle. Their number was incomplete; for Judas, repenting of his crime when it was too late, had destroyed himself. They resolved to fill up the blank by the admission into their body of one of the

seventy whom the Lord had chosen. Lots were cast, according to the usage of the times, and Matthias became an apostle in Judas' room.

The Lord's ascension took place on the fortieth day after the passover. Ten days more brought on the feast of Pentecost, on which occasion, from year to year, there came up to Jerusalem from all quarters devout men — as well Jews born, as proselytes, — to worship in the temple, and to offer the customary oblations. It was a convenient season for the fulfilment of Christ's great promise, and it did not pass unimproved. The disciples were gathered together "in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The Spirit of God was upon them. All doubts, all misgivings, passed from their minds. They saw into the councils of the great Creator clearly, — and knew that it was their privilege to render it clear to others. They ran out into the streets. They spoke to men from every nation under heaven, of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. They called upon all who heard to search the Scriptures for themselves; and such was the power of truth, and of the eloquence which attended this declaration of it, that numbers who heard "were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter told them what to do — to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins; and not fewer than three thousand persons accepted that same hour the joyful invitation.

From that day forward the work of conversion went on. Every believer took his part in it; but the leading instruments especially referred to in St. Luke's treatise were, at the outset, Peter, John, James, Stephen, and Philip; by and by Barnabas and Paul. Peter and John seem to have been the great preachers on the day of Pentecost. By the third hour of that day, that is so early as nine in the morning, they had laid the foundations of the Church; and at noon, going up to the temple to pray, they wrought their first miracle of healing. As they passed one of the gates, which, being made of Corinthian brass, was called "The Beautiful Gate," they saw a lame man, who had long been accustomed to beg there; and perceiving that he gazed at them with an expression more earnest than that of a common mendicant, they stopped and addressed him. "Then Peter said unto him, Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The man rose immediately. He followed the Apostles into the temple, and leaping and walking, and praising God, became scarcely less than the workers of the miracle, a means of leading converts to Christ.

An immense crowd gathered round the Apostles, to whom Peter was beginning to explain, that as the power of Christ had done this deed, so it would yet do more, when the priests, as well Sadducees as Pharisees, rendered furious by the success of the morning's appeal, came with a guard of soldiers, and seized the speaker. He was dragged, with John, to the common prison, and there shut up. But on the morrow when the Sanhedrim met, no charge could be substantiated against the apostles and they were dismissed, after having been straitly charged to teach no more in their master's name.

They did not so much as affect to recognise the justice of the command. They returned to their labours forthwith, and in a few hours more the three thousand converts had grown to five thousand, with a manifest tendency to enlarge the borders of the infant Church still further.

From day to day, and from hour to hour, the work of conversion went on. It produced, likewise, the purest morals, and the most unselfish generosity. No believer accounted his goods to be his own, so long as others of the faithful were in want; and many, carried away by the impulse of a newly awakened zeal, sold all their property, and laid the proceeds at the Apostles' feet. We read of no directions given to this effect. The act, when accomplished, might earn the praise of the believers, and secure to its performer influence in their community; but the Apostles neither commanded nor advised it, though they could not refuse to sanction it when performed. But the infant Church was composed of men, liable to the same infirmities which affect us at this day, and the proceedings of one Ananias, and of his wife Sapphira, gave great public scandal. They sold only a portion of their property; yet desiring to acquire influence, while at the same time they provided against contingencies, they brought the produce to Peter, and assured him that they had sold all. No mercy was shown to them. Their sin was of the deepest dye, and involved consequences most disastrous to the Church. They were smitten one after the other with sudden death, and "Great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things."

It would occupy more space than I can command were I to describe in detail the labours and the sufferings of the Apostles. Imprisoned, threatened, scourged, persecuted, they still published, in the

temple and in the streets, the wonderful works of God. Moreover, so prodigious was the influx of all classes into the Church, and especially of the poor, both within and without the city, that a third order of ministers was created, in order that all grounds of jealousy might be removed regarding the distribution of the common fund. These, called Deacons, a word which signifies in Greek, "attendants," were seven in number, namely, Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. Selected from among the Jews of the dispersion, they had it in charge to provide for the wants of the needy, and especially of the widows; and they were farther commissioned, wherever an opening might present itself, to preach the gospel and baptize. Doubtless they all did their duty. But above the rest, Stephen and Philip stand conspicuous; the former, because to him was granted the privilege of first laying down his life for the truth—the latter, inasmuch as through him, and by one whom he converted, a knowledge of the gospel was first spread into lands far removed from Judæa. The circumstances of each case were these.

A. D. 36. — Stephen seems to have been filled, from the outset, with the Holy Ghost. He spoke, too, with such a force of argument, and in such a dauntless spirit, that the chief priests, no longer able to endure his reproofs, determined to destroy him. Now it happened that at this time, the authority of Rome was interrupted, so to speak, in Jerusalem. Pontius Pilate had been recalled, and no successor as yet arriving, the Sanhedrim, under the pretext of maintaining order in the province, claimed again the right to decide in capital cases, and put Stephen on his trial. False witnesses were not wanting. He was charged with blasphemy,

and condemned, and being carried without the city-walls, a rabble stoned him to death. Like his Lord for whom he died, he prayed for his murderers to the last, and "fell asleep."

Having thus begun to kill, the Sanhedrim followed up its sanguinary policy with such effect that the Christians were forced to flee, as they best might, from Jerusalem. But their dispersion had no other result than to spread over a wider surface the knowledge of Christianity. Philip, among others, conveyed it into Samaria, and after he had made many converts there, met, upon the road to Gaza, an Ethiopian noble, who was returning in his chariot from attending one of the festivals in Jerusalem. The noble, or eunuch, as he is called in Scripture, read, as he journeyed, from the book of Isaiah; and Philip, approaching his chariot, asked if he understood what the prophet meant. It was a strange, bold question, but the great man answered it gently, and a conversation followed which led to the hearty conversion of the Ethiopian. He was baptized in a pool or stream which they reached as they went along. Immediately Philip was borne away by the Spirit of God; and the grateful convert returning home, laid the foundation of a Church, with which we are only now beginning to become acquainted, though it claims to have subsisted in the midst of hostile tribes, from the times of the Apostles.

It is a remarkable fact, that in spite of the success which attended his ministrations, Philip the deacon did not possess the power of conferring upon his converts "the gift of the Holy Ghost." He preached and baptized, and admitted many, by this means, into the Church of Christ. But the laying on of hands did not appertain to his office, and we accordingly find that Peter and John were, at a subsequent

period, sent down by the brethren to do in Samaria what Philip had not presumed to attempt. It is upon this act, and upon others of a similar nature, that the church founds that rite of confirmation, which is practised in all lands under some form of usage or another, wherever the first principles of Christianity are taught.

CHAP. XLIX.

BOOK OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES — *continued.*

CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL. HIS LABOURS AND THOSE OF PETER.

THERE had been present at the martyrdom of Stephen a young man, named Saul, whom the sternest spirit of the sect of the Pharisees animated; and who, rejoicing over the death of one whom he regarded as an arch heretic, applied for and obtained leave to persecute the Christians wherever he could find them. Having filled with them the prisons of Jerusalem, he set out for Damascus, whither he had learned that many had betaken themselves; and was approaching the city, when all at once, a bright light shone from heaven, and he heard a voice which demanded "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He fell from his horse like one smitten with a deadly wound; and when his attendants raised him, his sight was gone. They carried him into Damascus, and for three days he meditated in total darkness over the appeal of one who had told him "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." He was a persecutor no more. The Lord had called him, and like his great ancestor, Abraham, he was not inattentive to the call. A man named Ananias —

a believer, who dwelt in the place — was instructed by a vision to go to him; and Saul, now wounded and smitten at heart, and yearning to do the Lord's will, prayed to be baptized. He was baptized. His sight came again, and from that day forth he laboured more than all the rest, to establish that faith of which in his ignorance he had once been so bitter, though so honest, a persecutor.

A. D. 37. — There was, as might be expected, in the Christian community, both suspicion and jealousy of Saul, when first he declared his conversion. The Jews, on the other hand, heard of it with the wildest indignation; and had he not escaped over the town-wall by night, his career as an apostle would have ended where it began. But Paul (for so he now called himself) held the latter feeling very light, and soon overcame the former by the integrity of his conduct. He travelled to Jerusalem, where Barnabas at once took him by the hand, and agreed to be his companion in the ministry. For the persecution which began with Stephen's murder was, by this time, blown over, and the infant Church held its councils, as it had previously done, in the capital of Judæa. Paul joined in the deliberations of his brethren there, and helped them to assign to each Apostle his province of labour; for the work was parcelled out among many, though we are unable to fix accurately the fields of more than three. Peter took Judæa, Galilee, and Samaria, for his circuit; Paul and Barnabas, Cilicia and Syria; and James, who appears to have generally presided at such synods as from time to time were held, abode still in Jerusalem; — and so the great task of converting the world was resumed.

Up to the present moment, the gospel had been preached only to people either of Jewish descent,

or converts in whole or in part to Judaism. At Lydda, Saron, and Joppa, in each of which we find him working miracles, Peter invited none, except those read in the law, to listen to him. But at Joppa fresh light was poured into his mind. He had ascended to the flat roof of the house in which he lodged, that he might worship, according to the customs of his people, with his face toward Jerusalem, when, being overcome with a long fast, he fell into a trance. While in this condition, a vision, as of a great sheet let down by the four corners from heaven, presented itself to the eye of his mind. Living creatures of every sort were in it, and he heard a voice which said, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." Peter remonstrated, on the ground that he had never eaten anything that was common or unclean, and was answered by the remark, "that which God has cleansed, call not thou unclean." The vision was repeated thrice, and then it passed away.

Peter felt that not without a purpose had this strange scene been enacted; and he was yet considering with himself what the vision could mean, when his host informed him that there stood at the gate three men desiring to see him. They came to deliver to him a message from a Roman Centurion, named Cornelius, who also, in his house at Cæsarea, had seen a vision. Peter went at once with the men; and hearing from Cornelius that an angel had appeared to him, he began to speak to the Gentile officer of Christ Jesus and his gospel. He addressed himself to a willing auditor, and the effect proved to be as prompt as it was marvellous. "While he yet spake," says St. Luke, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision (that is Jews by lineage) were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because on the Gentiles

also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." Who could forbid persons so favoured to be baptized? No one. A Roman soldier thus became the honoured and happy first fruits of the Gentile world; and the veil which had heretofore separated God's creatures into two classes, was torn down, never to be restored.

Tidings of this great event soon spread abroad. They produced, for the most part, unmixed joy; and the scruples of the disciples being thereby removed, the gospel was everywhere offered to all who seemed willing to accept it. Multitudes from heathenism came in at Cyprus, Cyrene, and Antioch; indeed, so rapid was the work of conversion at the latter place, that there, for the first time, the name of Christians was given, in the spirit of insult, to the believers.

A. D. 44.—Seven years had now elapsed since the martyrdom of Stephen. They had, with the exception of the first, been years of peace to the infant Church; for the anarchy that followed the recall of Pilate, lasted only till the arrival of his successor; and the Romans held in too much contempt both the Jewish nation and their customs, to suffer any violence to be offered to men who spoke against either. A change, however, came over the form of the government of Judæa, and it brought evil to the Christians in its train. The Emperor Claudius taking Herod Agrippa into favour, set him up as king; and in A. D. 44, he arrived to occupy the royal palace in Jerusalem. He began his reign by causing James, the brother of John, to be put to death; and perceiving that the act was agreeable to the bulk of his subjects, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Once more the faithful bent before the storm. Many fled, as the Lord had directed them to do, carrying their creed and their pure morality

along with them ; and the Church thus gained, as in all cases she has done, by the misfortunes of her children. Nor was Peter forsaken. God sent his angel at midnight, who shook the chains from the Apostle's limbs, and throwing open the doors of the prison, led him into the streets. There was great rejoicing among the believers when they saw their guide and counsellor thus restored to them ; and the feeling suffered no abatement when Agrippa the tyrant was soon afterwards smitten with a loathsome disease and died.

While these events were passing in Jerusalem, Paul with his friend Barnabas, after a year well spent in Antioch, set out upon a tour more extended than had yet been undertaken by any of the Lord's disciples. They paid, indeed, a visit to the capital of Christianity, being the bearers of a contribution which the Christians of Antioch had made in order to supply the wants of their Jewish brethren. But they made no protracted sojourn there ; the Spirit urging them to seek a wider field, and amply justifying the suggestion. Seleucia, Cyprus, and Paphos were visited by them in succession, and in this latter island, Sergius Paulus, the governor, joined himself to the company of the believers. Pamphylia and Pisidia next heard from them God's message of peace, which seems to have been accepted in both provinces more gratefully by the Gentiles than by their own countrymen. Indeed, so hostile were the Jews of Antioch, a chief city in Pisidia, that Paul and Barnabas narrowly escaped being torn to pieces by them. They were forced to escape through Iconium to Lystra, where Paul restored strength to the limbs of an impotent man, whom his preaching seems in the first instance to have converted. A strange scene followed. The heathen population,

astonished at such a display of power, pronounced Paul to be Mercury, and Barnabas Jupiter; nor was it without considerable exertion that the Apostles prevented the offering to them of burnt sacrifices.

The giddy crowd which at one moment desired to treat Paul as a god, listened at the next to the calumnies of his enemies, and were incited by bad men from Iconium to seize upon him and stone him. He escaped, however, with his life, and taking refuge in Derbe, abode there for some time, Barnabas still labouring with him. We find him next revisiting Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, and Pisidia; whence he passes through Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia. Three whole years are thus expended; at the close of which he goes back to Antioch in Syria, where by and by circumstances occur that produce something like division in the Church. There came down to this place from Jerusalem, certain converts from among the sect of the Pharisees, who, full of mistaken zeal for the law under which their youth had been spent, insisted that all who came to Christ from among Gentiles, should submit to circumcision. Paul stoutly withstood the proposal, whereupon a controversy arose of so virulent a nature, that nothing short of a decision by the Church in general council assembled, would be accepted by either side as satisfactory. Accordingly, a general assembly of the Church was held in Jerusalem; and, after much deliberation, a decree went forth which entirely and for ever exempted Gentile converts from the yoke which had been unwisely pressed upon them. "It seemed good," so ran the decree "to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that ye abstain from

meats offered unto idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication."

A. D. 53.—Having settled these points, and devoted sufficient time to the confirmation of the Church in Antioch, Paul proposed to his friend Barnabas that they should again go round the various churches which they had planted during their former tour. A difference of opinion arose, however, between them, respecting the parties whom it would be expedient to take as their attendants; and they separated. Barnabas, we are told, took Mark, and with him sailed for Cyprus, — while Paul, with Silas as his companion, went through Syria and Cilicia. While thus engaged, he met at Derbe a young man called Timotheus or Timothy. Descended from a Greek father by a Jewish mother, Timothy was not ignorant of the scriptures of the Old Testament; and when Paul spoke to him of the fulfilment of the law in Jesus, he understood the line of argument, and was convinced by it. Yet Paul, in order that there might be no ground of complaint or jealousy among the Jews, went further. He required that Timothy should submit to circumcision; and that earnest believer, understanding his teacher's motive and approving of it, did as he was requested, and through the gate of the first covenant entered into the second.

My narrowing space will not permit me to follow in detail the residue of St. Paul's wanderings; with which, exclusively, and the results that attended them, the Book of the Acts of the Apostles is henceforth occupied. I content myself, therefore, with stating, that he visited in succession, Philippi of Macedonia, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens; that in each of these places God opened for him a door of utterance, and that by signs and wonders, not less than by the convincing nature of his argu-

ments, he brought over continually fresh converts to the gospel. In Philippi and in Thessalonica this was not done without suffering and hazard. In the former place St. Paul was beaten and imprisoned; in the latter he narrowly escaped being stoned: yet in both instances the wrongs put upon the teacher redounded to the advancement of the religion which he taught.

CHAP. L.

BOOK OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES—

*continued.*ST. PAUL'S TRAVELS. THE GREAT PROGRESS OF
THE GOSPEL.

A. D. 58. — FOR about fourteen years St. Paul continued thus to labour in the advancement of the gospel of his Lord. He traversed, while so employed, the provinces of Syria, Cappadocia, Pontus, Galatia, Phrygia, Pisidia, Pamphylia, Lystra, Bithynia, Thracia, and Macedonia. He visited Neapolis, Corinth, Troas, Ephesus, Cinchrea, and Athens, in Greece. He encountered everywhere trials, and dangers, and overcame them. In Achaia a mob had well-nigh torn him to pieces; but the governor of the province, Gallio, dispersed them. In Ephesus the fabricators of images of the goddess Diana, with Demetrius, a silver-smith, at their head, raised the entire population against him, which the town clerk, not without exceeding skill, put down. Everywhere, indeed, the enemies of the truth sought his life, which was more than once preserved only by timely flight. His works, too, were of equal potency with his words. At Troas he restored to life a young

man, who, while asleep, had fallen through an upper loft to the ground, and was killed. Wherever he went maladies fled at his bidding. Demoniacs, and persons afflicted with epilepsy, threw aside their infirmities, when charged to do so. Nay, so ample were the powers given to him, that "God," says St. Luke, "wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." Memorable, too, were the conversions of which he was the direct cause. Timothy, Titus, Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, Aquila, and Priscilla, with many more of fame scarce second to theirs, embraced the faith of Christ as he expounded it to them.

But Paul while thus working for the present, was not unmindful of the future. He ordained and appointed pastors to the various churches which he planted, and from time to time made a circuit round to strengthen and confirm them in their operations. His sojourn in different cities varied from a few days to one or more years. Antioch, in Syria, received frequent visits from him; so did Corinth, so did Ephesus. At the latter place we are told that he abode two years, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus, for already were the heads and teachers of sects among the Heathen philosophers forward to hear him. At last he determined to go up once more to Jerusalem, that he might celebrate with the brethren there the feast of Pentecost; and, having sent his friends Timothy and Erastus before him, made preparations to follow.

He had written from Ephesus his first Epistle to the Corinthians, when the tumult occurred of which I have spoken as stirred up by Demetrius

the silversmith. Paul narrowly escaped on that occasion being thrown to wild-beasts, and not caring to tempt God's providence too much, he hurried forward his preparations. But as he had resolved to visit once more the churches of Achaia and Macedonia, he travelled by way of Troas into the latter province. There he lingered long enough to confirm the various churches, after which he proceeded to Corinth, whence he addressed his Epistle to the Romans. We find him next at Philippi laden with certain alms which the faithful in Greece had contributed for the relief of their more destitute brethren in Judæa; whence he proceeded to Troas again. A journey on foot carried him next to Assos, then a voyage to Mitylene and Trogyllium; from which place he proceeded to Miletus, that he might there meet, and sustain by his advice, the heads of the church at Ephesus. Finally, passing through Coos and Rhodes to Patara, he there took ship and was in due time landed at Tyre. Here many affectionate friends received him. They were importunate, moreover, that he should abandon his purpose of going up, at that time, to Jerusalem. But neither entreaties, nor the forewarnings of danger, with which his friends endeavoured to strengthen their arguments, availed. Paul was resolute to do and to suffer whatever the Lord might require, and he adhered to his determination.

A. D. 60. — The first act of St. Paul after his arrival in Jerusalem was to present himself to James, surnamed the less, and the other chief pastors of that city, and to give to them an account of his labours and their results. They heard him gladly and then advised, with a view to conciliate the people, that he should shave his head, and present himself in the temple as one who had taken a vow, and was come up to present the

offering which was customary, on its accomplishment. Paul did as they recommended, but taking with him one Trophimus, an Ephesian convert, he furnished a ready handle to his enemies, who at once charged him with polluting the holy place. A tumult immediately ensued, and he would have been beaten to death in the streets, had not Claudius Lysias, the Roman commandant, interfered with an armed party, and carried him off to the castle. But even in the castle he was not safe. A body of zealots bound themselves by a vow neither to eat nor drink till they had killed him; and a plan was laid for getting him into their power, to which the chief priests seem to have been parties. But a relative of Paul discovered the plot, and Paul himself, who had escaped the disgrace of scourging only by making known the fact, that he enjoyed the privileges of Roman citizenship, desired the young man to report the conspiracy to the chief captain. The consequence was that the prisoner was escorted that same night by a troop of horse, and a body of spearmen, to Cesarea, where Claudius Felix, procurator under the emperor Nero, held his court.

Paul was twice put upon his trial at Cesarea; first when his accusers from Jerusalem appeared by their hired advocate against him, and next when the procurator, with his Jewish wife, Drusilla, to gratify their own curiosity, summoned him into court. No good to him arose out of either examination. Doubtless, he pleaded his own cause so well that his judges felt that he was innocent; indeed, such proved to be the strength of his reasoning about "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," that Felix trembled while he listened. But the reasoner was not set at liberty, and next year, when Festus came to relieve Felix in the government, Paul

abode in prison still. At last, finding that justice was not to be had in the provinces, but that the new procurator rather sought to hand him over, cunningly to the chief priests, Paul appealed to Cæsar, and secured thereby his transmission to Rome. He did not, however, set out upon that memorable journey till a fresh opportunity had been afforded of testing the power of truth when uttered before guilt in high places. Agrippa, the son of the tyrant who put to death James, the brother of John, governed at this time a new kingdom, formed out of various provinces of Palestine and the countries adjacent. He came with his sister, Bernice, to salute the new procurator of Judæa; and being curious to see and hear Paul, Festus produced him. Paul spoke as before, making his appeal, however, especially to Agrippa; and when he concluded the king exclaimed, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." But there was no release for him. To Cæsar he had appealed, and to Cæsar he must needs go.

A. D. 61. — The removal of Paul to Rome being now finally determined upon, he was given in charge to a centurion, named Julius, and carried, under a military escort, on board of ship. The voyage appears to have been a safe and pleasant one as far as the Fair Havens, in Crete. But there the weather broke, and Paul would have persuaded the centurion if he could, to abide in a place of shelter till the winter was passed. Julius, however, as was natural, paid more heed to the opinions of his ship-captain than to the suggestions of his prisoner; and the former being desirous of prosecuting the voyage, he offered no opposition. A violent storm soon caught them. For three days they were driven they knew not where, and at last found themselves rushing towards an iron-bound coast, which

proved to be that of Malta. In this emergency the crew thought only of themselves, and endeavoured to take to the boats; but Paul pointing out that if they abandoned the ship there could be no safety for the passengers, the centurion interfered, and the boats were cut adrift. There was complete despair forthwith, in every quarter. Men ceased even to hope, and would have perished without an effort made to avert their doom, had not Paul assured them, that God had given all their lives to his prayers. It is astonishing how great an influence good men, in such circumstances, acquire, over the minds of others, provided they themselves be calm. The seamen returned to their duty. They guided the driving ship into a creek, and ran her on shore, by the stem; where the waves broke over her, and her stern soon went to pieces. But they were now within easy distance of the shore, and all who could swim being directed to throw themselves into the waters, the rest clung to planks and pieces of the wreck. The result was that the whole company escaped.

Paul abode about three months in Malta. He performed many gracious acts there, healing the governor, with as many sick among the inhabitants as were brought to him; and on the return of spring proceeded by way of Syracuse to Puteoli, now called Pozzuoli, in Naples. A week spent here in the society of believers, greatly refreshed him; and at the end of it he took the road to Rome. His arrival was not unexpected. Rome could already boast of a large community of Christians, whom their correspondents in Jerusalem had informed of all that befell St. Paul; and he found on reaching a place called Appii forum, that multitudes were there, eager to bid him welcome. They conducted him to the capital of the world, where his innocence

was soon established, and though placed under the observation of the police, he was permitted to dwell in his own hired house, where, for the space of two whole years, he received all that came to him, and preached Jesus Christ and his gospel.

With the arrival of St. Paul in Rome ends what in strict propriety of speech deserves to be described as Sacred History. We learn, indeed, a great deal more concerning both St. Paul and the rest of the apostles, from other sources, which are worthy of all credit; but it would be unwise in such a narrative as the present to mix up the records of the most trustworthy of uninspired men with facts which come to us from the dictation of God's Holy Spirit. Enough, therefore, is done when I state that from day to day the Lord's personal followers, with others who received from them authority to preach, spread the knowledge of the Gospel of Salvation through the world. Many, too, sealed their testimony with their blood. James, the relative of our Lord, after long presiding over the Church at Jerusalem, suffered martyrdom there, A. D. 62. Andrew, also, about the same time was put to death at Patras in Arabia. Simon, the Canaanite, is said to have visited Britain, and perished there. Thomas was slain in Judæa; Philip at Theopolis in Phrygia; Bartholomew, otherwise called Daniel, in Armenia; Matthias in Cappadocia; Barnabas at Salamis; and Jude, the author of the Epistle which bears his name, in Persia. Concerning Paul himself, his own writings show that being discharged by proclamation in the year 63, he passed from Italy into Spain and from Spain into Judæa. Crete, Philippi, Macedonia, all saw him again; he visited Timothy at Ephesus, and left Trophimus sick at Miletus. Finally, travelling back to Rome, he made a convert there

of the favourite concubine of Nero, who cast him into prison, where all except Onisephorus forsook him. Moreover, Peter shared this his last trial. After traversing the East and making converts from among his brethren according to the flesh, he, too, arrived at Rome, whence his general epistles are dated. The two apostles, we are told, held frequent and sweet communion together; and they died on the same day; Paul being beheaded, a favour which his citizenship procured for him, while Peter was crucified, with his head towards the ground. The best authorities fix the occurrence of this double martyrdom A. D. 66.

The last survivor of all the Lord's personal attendants was John. He sheltered the Virgin Mary till the day of her death. He survived the fall and destruction of Jerusalem, A. D. 70. He was banished to the caves of Patmos by Domitian, A. D. 85; and was favoured amid their gloom with the visions which he has recorded in his Book of Revelations. In A. D. 96 he recovered his freedom and spent the residue of his days in peace, at Ephesus. John was 97 years of age when he wrote his beautiful Gospel. He died, in his bed, A. D. 100, in his hundredth year, while Trajan filled the throne of the empire.

How the Gospel which these holy men preached has spread and is spreading over the world, my young readers need not be told. But let them always take care to keep in mind, that it serves to no purpose, anywhere or to any persons who do not learn from it to promote, by the piety and uprightness of their lives, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good-will among men."

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

	B. C.
Saul - - - - -	1097
David - - - - -	1055
Solomon - - - - -	1015

KINGS OF JUDAH.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

	B. C.		B. C.
Rehoboam - - -	975	Jeroboam - - -	975
Abijam - - -	958	Nadab - - -	954
Asa - - -	955	Baasha - - -	940
Jehoshaphat - -	914	Elah - - -	930
Jehoram - - -	889	Zimri - - -	929
Ahaziah - - -	885	Omri - - -	925
Athaliah (Queen) -	884	Ahab - - -	918
Joash - - -	878	Ahaziah - - -	897
Amaziah - - -	839	Jehoram - - -	896
Uzziah or Azariah -	810	Jehoash - - -	884
Jotham - - -	758	Jehoahaz - - -	856
Ahaz - - -	742	Jehoash - - -	841
Hezekiah - - -	727	Jeroboam II. - -	825
		Zachariah - - -	874
		Shallum - - -	773
		Menabem - - -	772
		Pekahiah - - -	761
		Pekah - - -	759
		Hoshea - - -	739
		Samaria taken - -	721

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	B. C.
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Amon - - -	643
Josiah - - -	641
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Hyrcanus II.	69
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Herod the Great	39





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